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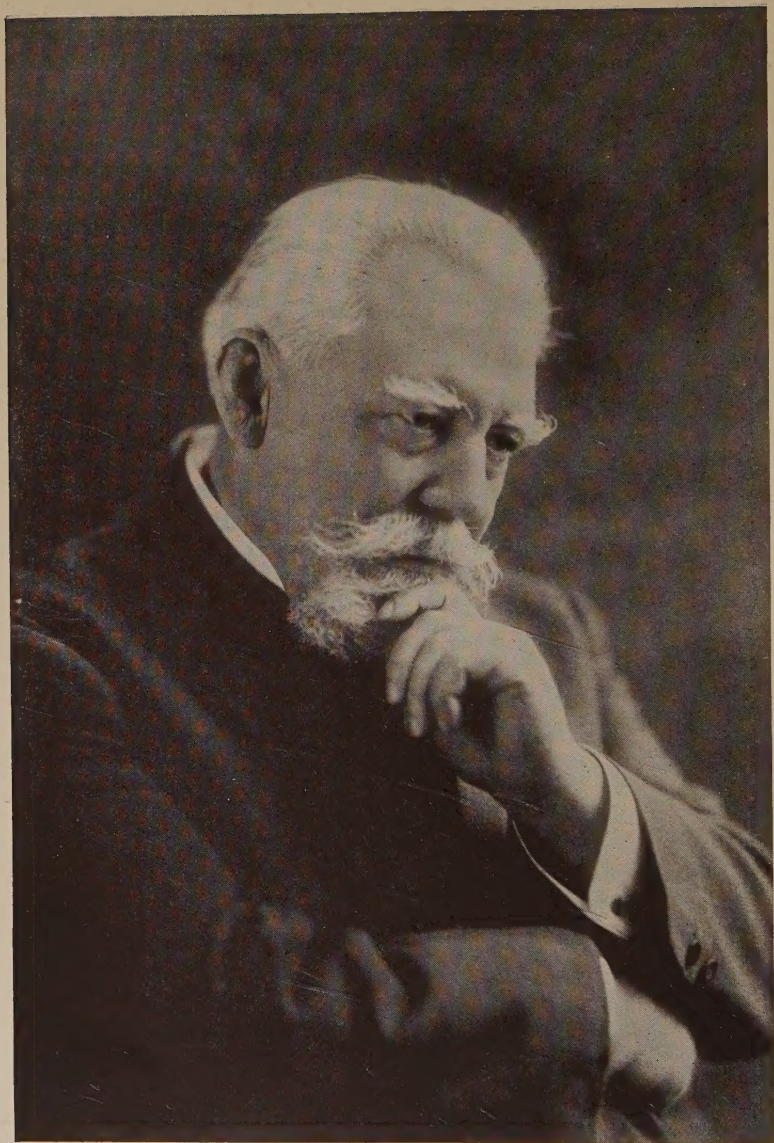


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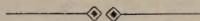
PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

IN CABINS AND SOD-HOUSES

BY

THOMAS HUSTON MACBRIDE

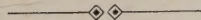
President Emeritus State University of Iowa



*There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased.*

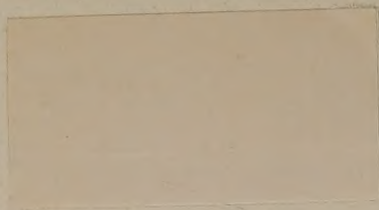
*Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast,
Erwirb es um es zu besitzen.*

*The memory of the son can but transmit the
reminiscence of the sire.*



PUBLISHED AT IOWA CITY IOWA IN 1928 BY
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To
The Cherished Memory
of
A Pioneer's Daughter
H. D. M.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In Cabins and Sod-Houses is no mere chronicle of historical events: it deals with "the field of thought" rather than with "the field of action".

In terms of years this book may be said to cover the period between 1846 and 1860. To portray the intellectual life of the men and women who four-score years ago laid the foundations of the prairie Commonwealth of Iowa is the author's chief concern.

What "men thought of themselves, their own doings, and their relations to the world" is told by one who "walked in companionship and counsel" with them. Fortunate is the Commonwealth that has such an interpreter of its intellectual life.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND EDITOR
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY IOWA

Il me semble difficile, lorsqu'on est arrivé en quelque endroit nouveau, en quelque coin du monde, pour s'y établir et y vivre quelque temps, de ne pas s'enquérir tout d'abord de l'histoire du lieu (et, si obscur, si isolé qu'il soit, c'est bien rare qu'il n'en ait point).

SAINTE-BEUVE

Was den freilich einigermassen paradoxen Titel der Vertraulichkeiten aus meinem Leben Wahrheit und Dichtung betrifft, . . . es war mein ernstestes Bestreben das eigentliche Grundwahre, das, insofern ich es einsah, in meinem Leben obgewaltet hatte, möglichst darzustellen und auszudrucken. Wenn aber ein solches in späteren Jahren nicht möglich ist, ohne die Rückerinnerung, und also die Einbildungskraft wirken zu lassen, . . . so ist es klar dass man mehr die Resultate und, wie wir uns das Vergangene jetzt denken, als die Einzelheiten, wie sie sich damals ereigneten, aufstellen und hervorheben werde. Bringt ja selbst die gemeinste Chronik nothwendig etwas von dem Geiste der Zeit mit, in der sie geschrieben wurde. Wird das vierzehnte Jahrhundert einen Kometen nicht ahnungsvoller überliefern, als das neunzehnte? Ja ein bedeutendes Ereigniss wird man, in derselben Stadt, Abends anders als des Morgens erzählen hören.

GOETHE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

By the presentation of pictures, this volume would portray the intellectual life of men and women who four-score years ago laid the foundations of a prairie commonwealth. Difficulties these people found not essentially unlike those that had all the while confronted their restless forbears, carrying civilization from Jamestown and Plymouth Rock. They were in peril from hunger, from winter's frost and summer's heat, from the wildness of the prairie storm; they suffered from malaise, illness, and fevers of every sort, far from help; but that they transcended their difficulties, greatly triumphed, established the institutions that they prized, and left them a priceless legacy to their children is fact apparent.

Such experiences, the juxtaposition of nature's ruder wildness and the gentleness of culture, the ever-present incongruity between reward and merit, constitute the trite elements of romance, and to romance almost every commonwealth has already made its contribution.

But to the historian, whether touched or not by the romance of his theme, two fields lie open: the field of thought and the field of action. He may concern himself with physical change, the stream of external events; or not ignoring these, he may devote his attention rather to their response in human life, what men thought of themselves, their own doings, and their relations to the world.

Our narrative may accordingly, in time's sequence and in incident, take the form of history, and such in

general purport it modestly assumes to be; but persons, names, and places are more or less fictitious; just as for the skillful mathematician now and then, integral values may be neglected without hazard to the argument.

In the preparation of these sketches the author has had the assistance of written records treasured by our State Historical Society; in long experience upon the prairie he has enjoyed the personal acquaintance and friendship of very many of the men and women who were actively concerned in all that went on to build the world we see. With an honored father, whose active life carried him from the mountains of Tennessee to the meadows of Illinois and Iowa, the author walked in companionship and counsel in Iowa more than fifty years. Care has been taken to check with available records all memories of past days and years, so that nowhere have the facts of history been knowingly traversed; and it is hoped that in the effort to present *Wahrheit*, *Dichtung* has not been improperly used. In other words, it has been the writer's effort to present conditions, both physical and social, quite as he discovered them, and grew to feel them.

Between '46 and '60, some very real problems touched the lives of men, dwellers albeit by the Republic's outmost fringe; but the John Brown fiasco, insignificant in itself, led to consequences so momentous that thereafter the life of the prairie was never quite the same. For Iowa, as for the Republic, the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 opened a volume new.

THOMAS H. MACBRIDE

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY IOWA

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I

THE COMMUNITY DISCOVERED

Our little prairie community was very much like many another that less than a century ago took possession of the gently rolling plains of eastern Iowa. How any one of us happened to come to that particular meadow, hardly one of us could tell. We set out from older communities not knowing whither we went, and presently found ourselves on the prairie, nearly all strangers at the outset, hailing from every section, united only in the spirit of youth — the urge that drives every man to repeat the experience of his fathers, to seek for himself place and fortune and home in this old, but for him new, world.

Those first on the ground selected lands which charmed alike by beauty, and by nearness to water and to forest, at that time the only source of fuel. Those coming later dropped down on this quarter-section or on that, as circumstances might determine.

Of course we all knew each other soon. If we did not know a man's name, we had no hesitation in riding over to ask him; nor was there any delicacy as to reporting, to the limits of opportunity, any facts ascertainable about a newcomer, his wife, his children, his cattle, his personal history, and his belongings.

For the crystallizing or organization of such a heterogeneous section of humanity, Sunday seemed to offer best occasion. Father Blew stirred to life the community spirit by riding the prairie all one Saturday afternoon and inviting everybody to 'meeting' at his house at two

o'clock the next day. Of course everybody went, even though everybody knew that Father Blew's house was no bigger than the average at that time, and contained no more than two or three rooms at most. But it was summer-time, and those who could not get indoors could stay out and look in at the windows, or even sit in the wagons and hear, through the open door, what was going on within.

Father Blew was a preacher, sure enough. Howbeit what sort of a preacher, nobody ever knew; nor, had any one asked, would he have departed perhaps one whit the wiser. There was something in the way — a vague something indefinable that stood ever in the way of curiosity, a panoply of personal dignity all unbroken. His generosity, his breadth of view, were marvelous, included everybody. His evident intelligence, his unselfish spirit charmed his neighbors; his religious meetings were matters of privilege, prized! Otherwise he lived a quiet, secluded life; his companion a spinster sister, rather reticent, a keeper-at-home, but a servant withal to every soul in need.

The house was noted as the first in the neighborhood to have a garden enclosed by a picket fence. There was also a fence before the door and in the narrow yard the blue-grass grew right up to the very baseboards. There were no romping children there to trample it out, or keep the ground about the cottage bare. This was believed to be the first appearance of blue-grass in that county, and there are those to-day who would derive the name of the now universal sod from that of the old-time prairie preacher.

However this may be, the Sunday invitation, once accepted, was oft repeated and with the same results,

again and again, until meeting at Father Blew's became quite the custom; and any fine Sunday afternoon would bring out such a crowd of people that 'movers' sometimes stopped their white-covered wagons on the highway and sent some one up to ask if it was a funeral?

It was on some such Sunday in the early fall that Father Blew closed his sermon with the announcement that after singing, all the men of the congregation were invited to meet about Gerrit Simpson's wagon outside, to consider a matter of great importance to the whole community.

How the news got outside is not now recalled, but no second announcement was necessary. By the time the tones of *Old Hundredth* had died away and the benediction was well pronounced, such a crowd had gathered about Simpson's wagon that Mrs. Simpson, who had been in the house, could not see it at all, and Father Blew found great difficulty in getting into the forum for himself appointed.

The old gentleman wore a pair of home-spun pantaloons of a tint since irreverently designated 'butter-nut', and his coat was of the cut known as 'shad-belly' with shiny brass buttons, but his vest seemed clerical and we all wondered where he got it. As he rose that afternoon, in Simpson's wagon, and looked over his glasses at the crowd, he seemed so dignified, and yet withal so benevolent that the people instinctively recognized their leader and required not so much as a gesture for perfect silence and attention.

'Friends and neighbors', began Father Blew, 'I have as you know no children of my own, but I notice that all — or almost all — of you are men of family; this is a most salubrious climate and God has given us many

children. They are like prairie-chickens in a buckwheat-patch in fall; and yet so far they are learning nothing. They are ignorant children. They know nothing except the wild freedom of these great meadows, and the skill for the little daily tasks which you assign them. How shall these children become citizens of the great Republic unless they learn to know its history and can read its law? We must have a school. All you who are in favor of a school for this community raise your hands!' Every hand went up, except that of Peter Mitchell, the Englishman; but he was deaf and could hardly have been expected to give assent to such a proposition until it was explained to him.

'Now', continued Father Blew, 'in order to have a school we must have a schoolhouse; our first schoolhouse back in Ohio was built of logs and I propose a log schoolhouse here. Gerrit Simpson offers a half-acre of his hilltop for the schoolyard, and if we all turn in and bring logs from the timber during this week, especially on Friday, we can have a raising-bee Saturday, and next Sunday morning will see a new schoolhouse and a big one.'

The proposition was received with shouts. Gerrit Simpson's half-acre was agreed to, as centrally located, and that quiet gentleman was induced to make it an acre. Bob Langstraw agreed to furnish all details as to numbers and dimensions; every farmer proposed what he could do, most agreeing to bring logs, although Sam Bystone was allowed to bring from his quarry a load or two of rock for foundation and chimney-base, while 'Saw-mill' Johnnie promised slabs enough for the floor and seats and inch-boards for the desks.

All was conditioned on fine weather. But in those

days, for some reason, the weather was always fine. Morning after morning in late summer the sun rose gloriously over the low wave-like hills of the horizon and chased away the chill of night, and at eve sank red again into the grassy plain, just as for the sailor he dips beneath the level of the sea.

And so the sun rose fair on Friday; and soon it was evident that we were really a community and not a mere accidental clustering of families, for over the whole prairie there was a common stir. Everywhere teams and their drivers were on the road—mostly ‘running-gears’, the driver astride the hounds behind, his pendent feet and legs knocking the pollen from the asters as he passed.

In half an hour every team was out of sight, lost in the big woods that then occupied Slim River bottoms; but by afternoon Simpson’s hill looked like a gigantic woodpile. There were logs enough to build two school-houses, to say nothing of rock and slabs. Peter Mitchell brought in silence a load of lime and covered it with some of ‘Saw-mill’ Johnnie’s slabs. Somebody else had not forgotten sand, and Mr. Lyon,* the richest man in the neighborhood, banker sometimes — perhaps too often — for the rest, sent split walnut clapboards for the roof, just what he had left over from roofing his barns; Michael Lafferty had dressed them, every one, on a shaving-bench; he hoped there would be enough. Father Blew, in a work-a-day dress, stood there all day keep-

*Possibly *Leeuwen* to start with, in the staid, Dutch Mohawk Valley, but *Lywen* to Illinois it came. To patronymic oddity such as that, Mrs. Lyon made early objection, and in Iowa the lion, *couchant* all this while, sprang to his feet, in formal English orthography found due recognition, and pleased the prairie sages.

ing tally, and great was his satisfaction as he read to his sister that same evening how the forests of Lebanon did once furnish trees to build the Temple of Solomon!

II

BUILDING THE SCHOOLHOUSE

SATURDAY morning the sun rose early, but there were many on our prairie who that day saw him rise. There was business on hand; and a manifest excitement such as we never knew again until the day the shot was fired on Sumter, and then it was of a different sort. Father Blew is reported to have been found on the hill-top by Gerrit Simpson 'about sunrise'. Gerrit knew he had not been there all night, for the old man wore a different coat.

Gerrit himself was not only famous as the owner of the site on which the structure was so soon to rise but had won a reputation the fall before by setting up and tying one hundred shocks of corn in a single working-day, simply because he had heard that some man in Illinois had done this thing, and because nobody in our section believed it could be done. Then came Peter Snyder, a Pennsylvania cabinet-maker, one-half of his log house, his shop, who arrived to make the furnishings. Bob Langstraw, the carpenter, next arrived. Langstraw's technical skill — shown in many ways about his own unfinished residence — was the envy of the countryside. There was a curly-cue sawed ruffle all around his cornice, and the door-casings, so far as in place, were made of walnut, mitred at the corners! Bob brought abundant tools, plenty of spikes and nails, and went immediately to work. Was he not by general consent architect and superintendent of buildings.

The sound of his axe welcomed others of whom there

is small space here to tell. There was Gottlieb Landsman, a former sailor, who on the open prairie had built his house in likeness of the hull of a ship, and by a short ladder went into it by a sort of port-hole on the side, the wonder of mankind. Then there was Mr. Dennis, a tall, strong, black-bearded man, who said little but was called an abolitionist all the same; and Solomon Ramsgate who was a Methodist *par excellence*, who held family-worship night and morning, and who when on a summer day he opened his windows toward Jerusalem could be heard by half the settlement.

It was a common joke that Mr. Ramsgate's name should have been Ramshorn, but Mr. Blew objected, as did Mr. Henstop whose name, originally no doubt Hohenstauffen, had been thus curtailed in old Pennsylvania until it came to Iowa a constant temptation to levity. Nor must we omit Michael Lafferty, who came very early with a load of logs, all walnut, and a *tree to set out!* People said he had been out all night, for his timber was ten miles away.

Blessed be the memory of that man! His house was built of sod; but that tree is growing yet, and his grandchildren have played beneath its shadows. As for the walnut logs he said there was naught too good for the 'childer', and his logs went early into the structure. They were fine and straight, and were sound enough to make lumber when the old schoolhouse eventually went down, years after, to give place to a new structure of Minnesota pine.

By the time that all those living farthest from the scene were busy, each with axe or adz, or the tool that suited him best, the near neighbors began to put in an appearance. Peter Mitchell was there in time to lay

the rude corners and the hearth for the fireplace which was to occupy one end. Black Sambo helped him. Sambo, of course, lived with Dennis and took naturally to lime and whitewash. Later on as Samuel Beauregard he entered the army and served through the war; but this day he was tender to old Peter Mitchell and, as he afterward remarked, helped to lay the foundations of one of the 'first educational institutions in the State of Iowa'.

The first courses were laid in white oak. Then came Mr. Lafferty's walnut. After that, bass-wood and quaking asp, Father Blew objecting to hickory 'on account of the borers and dry-rot'.

Men worked as never before. Langstraw, as proud superintendent of construction, beveled each log for the next notch above, occasionally throwing out a stick which some fellow in his enthusiasm had notched on both sides. Everything went on in quiet save that now and then a thumb *would* get fast in the place where the chinking ought to be, when Father Blew's benediction was apt to be employed, part of it, at least, in an inverted sense; and that good man would charitably find occasion to turn his back and converse for a moment with Peter Mitchell in a somewhat elevated tone of voice which shut out all unusual sounds.

Toward noon the industry slackened somewhat. The sun grew warm. Coats had long since been shed, and the small boys, still barefoot, were sent with buckets to Bystone's spring again and again for fresh supplies. Began, also, some little anxious watching down the road, and not infrequent inquiries as to the time of day. Away on the ridge of the next line of hills Bob Langstraw declared he saw something red or yellow. Was it not

a cluster of New England aster or the waving wands of golden-rod? No, surely, for presently over all the prairie bright colors were predominant, reds and yellows and blues that to the eyes of hungry workmen outshone the colors of the flowers as mothers and daughters came burdened with buckets and baskets.

Bob saw a yellow sunbonnet with two or three red ones following after, and every man saw the color he loved the best. And the dinners they brought; and the excellence of it all: how shall it ever be told! Bread and butter; cooked meats of every delectable sort; prairie-chicken; young prairie-chicken, fried, perhaps not better than specimens of the ordinary *volaille aux jambes jaunes*, but so esteemed; pies — cream pies and ‘crumly’, pumpkin and green tomato, ground cherry, vinegar pies! Not so bad: but to make up, somebody brought wild-plum jelly, wild-grape jelly, crab-apple preserves, each with a flavor for which no finest pastry-book has ever yet suggested so much as a name! And Miss Blew somehow managed to lug over under her white apron a big pan full of pudding, composition, as usual in all best confections, all unknown, but savory, the wonder of the hour! Meantime Father Blew himself, from roaring fire, offered to all comers hot coffee with *cream*. What a banquet! What a merry company! What shouts of glad surprise as basket after basket disclosed its unexpected richness! ‘Why! Why!! Why!!!’ said Mr. Ramsgate, and then of a sudden all was quiet.

After dinner, however, the tongues were loosened. New as it was, our community was not destitute of themes for conversation. Had not Dave Hartrock’s boy been bitten by a rattlesnake last August, and, in absence of the requisite whiskey, had not the lad displayed re-

markable symptoms, all the markings of the reptile having 'come out one after another on the boy's body', so that people came for miles to see? No knowing what further transformations might have ensued, but that the necessary stimulus finally arrived.

Had not the 'soul sleepers' last winter engaged in a missionary tour in the settlement just south of us and were there not even now some whiffs of their doctrine circulating on our prairie winds, much to the vexation of Father Blew? Besides these more weighty matters, the usual neighborhood happenings were interesting then as now, though all unchronicled in the columns of the weekly journal.

Soon, however, one man after another picked up his tools. This was no time for talk. The log walls rose apace. The soft brown of the oak, the rich purple of the walnut, the pure white of the linden and aspen succeeded each other in bands around the house which Peter Snyder declared were handsome as the stripes in his wife's carpet.

This old artificer, by the way, consumed the day in building furniture. Selecting from the pile of slabs the straightest, the old chair-maker bored leg-holes on the bark side, made legs of hickory poles brought from his own woodpile, and so fitted a row of seats around the prospective schoolhouse almost before the walls were up. In the same way the cunning mechanic knew how to build the desks; for did he not bore holes around the walls inside at a convenient height and inclination, into these holes thrust slanting pins long enough to carry 'Saw-mill' Johnnie's smoothest planks, and when these were once in place the desks were done. Nowadays the seat revolves to the convenience of the pupil; in that

earlier and happier day the pupil revolved to the convenience of the desk, and whisked his legs now to this side of the bench, and now to that as duty might require.

Meantime the building rapidly approached completion. Many hands made light work. The walls were bound across by aspen ceiling-joists and similar straight poles built up the gables and tied them to each other and so largely supplied the place of rafters. A hole had been cut in the north wall for the fireplace; the chimney should rise outside. Opposite the chimney was the opening for a door. Gottlieb and Lafferty were the committee to lay the slab floor and build the door frame. Father Blew actually manufactured that day a pair of wooden hinges. Many is the day they creaked thereafter, summer and winter, groaning out their soapless misery.

Suffice to say that ere the sun went down that day the house was builded, at least so far as circumstances would permit. Mr. Lyon's shingles, better than expected, finally covered nearly the whole roof, and Mr. Simpson said he would bring over a few more some day and finish it. The fireplace was built up to the chimney-throat, and Mitchell and Sambo were to return and build it higher, and plaster up the chinking. It was agreed that these should be paid by subscription for over-time.

Lafferty and Gottlieb had each sawed out a section of a log or two, one on each side where long, low windows were to be, and Langstraw agreed to get the glass in 'before cold weather'. Snyder and Father Blew had the door swinging and creaking, and even constructed a wooden bolt to fasten it.

One by one the workmen drew off together to admire, while from behind them the sinking sun lent his most glorious rays, lighting the rude walls with colors dearer and more golden than the tints of stained glass — had they not done it themselves!

Just then a head was thrust out of the western window, if we may so dignify the long slot where the log had been removed, and Lafferty's voice it was that cried: 'Would you please open that door!' Lafferty's request was greeted with a shout and several started to release him from his unnoticed imprisonment.

'We thought you might stay in there all night', said Mr. Simpson.

'If any of ye gintlemen want to stay in there all night ye're welcome; but sure them that lived to get out in the morning would be dead with the cold', said the escaping prisoner, not entirely without some indications of temper.

Another shout louder than before greeted the bold rejoinder, and the men forgot they were tired and nearly fell over the logs in their fun. Gottlieb Landsman climbed up with much risk to loose rafters and poles and some of Mr. Lyon's shingles, and tied a bunch of autumn flowers to the end of the ridge-pole; that was German fashion, he said. Then Father Blew proposed three cheers for the new schoolhouse and they were given with a will, then three cheers for Iowa, heartier still; but when the echoes had died away Bob Longstraw sprang upon a log and waving his hat cried, 'three cheers for Father Blew', and these were loudest and longest of all.

Was it the cool air of evening that dimmed the old man's glasses with mist, so that he saw not the stout

farmers as silently gathering their tools they slipped off one by one each on his separate way? We can not say. Father Blew, as he had been first to come, was likewise last to go; and when a few weeks later the happy children chased each other round the corners of the new schoolhouse and shouted until their music would sometimes reach across the valley to his home, Father Blew would stand, and smiling watch them, as he tapped the garden pickets with his cane.

The first lighthouses were beacons kindled on the forelands; Eddystones are sometimes mistaken for stars!

III

DEDICATION : THE ASSEMBLING

STRANGE to tell, by eleven o'clock the next morning, almost the whole community was at the new schoolhouse. How it came about tradition fortunately fails not to relate.

According to Mr. Langstraw, Mr. Snyder recalled that he had left his best brace-and-bit somewhere about the building; whether inside or outside he could not say, but he was afraid of rain, or something that might spoil his tools! Of course the morning dawned without a cloud, cool, refreshing, with promise of a glorious day; but our men-folk were wise, and had long since learned to take no chances.

Now Mr. and Mrs. Snyder always did have early breakfast, certainly on Sunday no later than on other days; why should they? And on this particular morning breakfast was possibly a little earlier than usual. At any rate when at the table Mr. Snyder mentioned anxiety for his tools, his wife determined to hasten a little her morning work, to go along to see what the men had done. She had heard how the floor was cluttered with chips and dirt and her marvelous Pennsylvania sense of order was aroused. Sunday though it was, should she not carry along her favorite Pennsylvania weapon, a good, stout, stiff broom!

Mr. Langstraw, out looking after the morning chores, saw, of course, everything on the landscape; what successful farmer does not? He saw at a distance what singular procession, unwonted, moving along the way?

A pair in single file — Mrs. Snyder somewhat in the rear, the broom upon her shoulder — ‘just about day-break’, as Langstraw put it. He watched until their journey ended, undoubtedly at the schoolhouse; then he too hastened to complete all morning engagements, in order to visit the scene of yesterday’s activity, not without a certain masculine curiosity, may we guess, to see just what the Snyders could be after. Langstraw, of course, was followed presently by his faithful spouse, out to see what could have called her husband.

The latest arrival found Mrs. Snyder sweeping and cleaning for dear life, piling the chips and shavings in the half-built fireplace as though the floor were her own, the new walls soon to be hung with polished tin and queen’s ware. Mrs. Langstraw could not resist the temptation to help; was not her husband straightening and leveling, just incidentally of course, here and there a slab in the floor, to make sweeping easier, while Mr. Snyder, with his all-unrusted tools, was setting up just one more bench, merely to keep Langstraw from using to patch a place in the floor, a straight well-chosen slab, worthy of somewhat nobler service.

But, had not Mr. Lyon also, for reasons best known to himself, suddenly determined to walk over to Simpson’s hill to see perchance what had been done with his shingles; and, the morning being all so fine, Hester accompanied him. The Simpsons, to be sure, saw them and joined them as they walked.

Mr. Ramsgate saw his neighbors coursing the hillside, noted their evident destination, and immediately advised his family that there was surely religious service at the schoolhouse to-day. ‘Everybody’s going’, he said, ‘hurry and get ready; they may want some singing’.

A PIONEER CABIN



‘Because the Lyonses and the Simpsons goes walking on Sunday is no sign as anybody is getting religion, as it seems to me’, said the more matter-of-fact mistress of the house; but the family presently did all set out, just the same.

And so it went, that morning the prairie over. Whether it was the beauty of the day resplendent, whether it was the social instinct that bids every man share the experience of his fellow, whether it was community interest, or whether it was just common old-fashioned curiosity — whatever it may have been — the fact remains that by aid of some subtle wireless telephony then on those wild, lonely fields of nature in full effect and force, but whose code would not now be understood by such as never ventured their all upon a new land unpeopled and untried, every man caught the summons urgent; neighbor gradually joined neighbor; and by half-past-ten of the clock the company swarming about the unfinished building was greater than had ever before been seen in that part of Iowa. Possibly just because it was Sunday and no one had said to his neighbor, ‘Come!’

Was it not in fact our simple feast of dedication? May not a structure built for use, by simple use be consecrated? Even so: but what assembly ever more fitly celebrated accomplished fact than did this happy prairie company, moved by impulses all their own; seeking high things, the things of the spirit, clearly or more dimly, but quite really discerned.

Oh, no, no ceremony! Did we need it? The structure itself was but a symbol; the wind whispering between the logs in open walls, where laughing children peered and saw each others’ eyes, made music glad and free;

and while within and out the door no smoking censer passed, from fresh-cut logs, warmed by the ascending sun, odors of linden, oak, and walnut rich streamed through all the unpolluted air of God's clean world!

Father Blew had been sitting quiet in his study. His sister, her simple household service soon complete, was also quiet—had been writing in fact—when, chancing to visit the eastern windows to draw the curtains against a sun already too intense, she saw with great surprise the unwonted color, the mass of moving people on the opposing hill. Instinctively she turned to ask her brother what it all could mean, when her astonishment was by no means lessened by a sudden thumping knock at the rear or kitchen door, where who should stand before her but Mr. Lyon and Mr. Dennis, 'a committee' as they said, 'to say that the whole community was at the schoolhouse and that they were sent to ask Father Blew to come over and talk to them before they went home to dinner, and so to help everybody feel the day was really Sunday'.

Now Father Blew was no sermonizer: it is distinctly related that he never in all his life wrote out a sermon, nor speech of any kind that history may claim or show, at least not *all* of one; but he was apparently always thinking, and accordingly had always, on occasion, something to say. He put on his best coat, his Quaker hat; his cane was in his hand. He stepped out, joined his callers, and started to do their bidding. 'What did you wish me to talk about?' he inquired.

'Talk of religion', said Mr. Lyon; 'it's Sunday'.

'For my part, I'd be glad if you say what religion *is*', said Mr. Dennis, nothing if not controversial.

Just then sounds of stirring music came clear across

the valley; not exactly 'Hail to the Chief' was it, though no doubt as such intended. The Ramsgates had been asked to sing and for half an hour had they not been doing their best. But now, all of a sudden, at sight of

EXHORTATION. C. M.

S. HUBBARD

1. On Jer - dan's storm - y banks.... I stand, And cast..... a
wish - ful eye To Canaan's fair and happy land, Where my possessions
To Canaan's fair and happy land, Where my possessions lie,.....
lie, my pos - sessions To Canaan's fair and hap - py land, Where my pos - sessions lie.
To Canaan's fair and hap - py land,

their leader on the way, they struck up the rousing, much inspiring, but now much forgotten phrases of Hibbard's *Exhortation*; and, apparently as never before, in fugue-like strains soprano and alto from 'Jordan's stormy banks' cast wishful eyes, while bolder bass and overtaking tenor hurried on 'to Canaan's fair and happy land'. The old gentleman liked that song and well the singers knew it. The people listened indeed,

but still had time to watch the little procession every moment nearer, coming up the slope; did not the quiet dignity of that plain, old-fashioned gentleman contribute to their own? What was the charm that hushed these farmers yet delighted them as at length he stood among them, and the music ceased?

IV

FATHER BLEW : THE SERMON

THE people were everywhere. Some, of course, thought to go into the house; had not Mrs. Snyder's broom done its work? But Father Blew took his station by an old cottonwood tree fortunately near, and in a twinkling all the benches were arranged before him. There were none too many. There sat the mothers with their children; the young men, who had carried the benches, and the maidens, not far away; while husbands and fathers stood back in isolated groups as would seem to be the fashion even yet where country people make assembly; on this occasion, not because our friends had matters important to discuss, not so; all of them were silent, some even whittling; in expectant groups they stood, because—so had stood their fathers from remotest generations!

Meantime, laying aside the gold-rimmed glasses he had forgotten to remove at home, the old gentleman met his audience with an answering smile. Very simply he began.

‘My friends and neighbors, this is a glorious day and we are all very happy. The world is very beautiful, very fine; our fellow men as ourselves are good-natured; we are all in the flush of health; I do not know of a case of lingering illness on the whole prairie. On such a day and so fair, a man's attitude of mind should be of the most pleasing sort; each of us may say “the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places”.

‘I foresaw, of course, that the schoolhouse would be

the place for Sunday meeting, probably for some time to come: that was the reason you recall, why we agreed to build it large; but I hardly expected to meet you here so soon. The roof is yet unfinished, and the difference between indoors and out can scarcely be discovered. How often have we read, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands".

'You too have learned that on a day like this, temple more splendid than that in which we stand may not be found. Altar with its sad traditions we need not; our pipe organ this magnificent cottonwood tree, its octaves tuned by nature, its face all splashed with gold; our floor, wide as the horizon, and as for carpet, tapestry forever clean and new, woven by the finger of God; our walls and ceiling the blue arch of heaven, lofty and fine beyond all power of man to conceive. Why seek we temple better than we see? To-day for bell or book or candle, what care we?'

The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silent before Him!

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, Oh Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. . . .

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.

For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place.

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

As he concluded, the speaker seemed quite unconscious of aught save the splendor of the words he uttered; his hands for the moment clasped, his upturned face illumined, as if in vision, he repeated:

He is the King of glory!

This was our introit on that privileged morning, nor did we lack response. The passing breeze began it by stirring to whispered song the golden leaves above our heads. Besides, since Father Blew, a lover of music, for some reason never sang nor named a song, all this was left to the Ramsgates, and the chorus presently began —

O worship the King all glorious above —

Owing to a deplorable lack of uniform numbering of the hymns on the pages of the few denominational song-books possessed by our people, the choice of the precentor alone determined whether on demand we should have congregational singing or merely the performance of the choir. Was it 'All Hail' or 'Am I a soldier' or the twenty-third psalm, the singing was quite general; otherwise the Ramsgates did their best, and it is reported good; though not lacking betimes that stimulus of cordial criticism to which all choirs are evidently ever entitled, if even in this superior day. At any rate on the present occasion, voices not a few joined in the opening stanzas, but one by one at succeeding lines fell off; only Mr. Langstraw by repetition of some cryptic syllable, as was believed, managing to share in the closing melody.

During the singing Father Blew found a seat on the out-rolled base of the cottonwood tree, Mrs. Lyon having with kindly forethought, placed a folded shawl above the projecting torus; but once the music died away, he rose and began a speech long remembered, though never written out in full as is believed, Mrs. Lyon only keeping her own synopsis.

'My friends the day is so fine, and we are so fortunate and should, for this day at least, be so happy, that speaking would seem in every way unnecessary, if not even pure effrontery; silence to-day in every way is eloquence more welcome, more profound.

'But we are all here together, and I am asked to speak and, "because it is Sunday" my theme shall be religion; I am even asked for a definition.

'There are many things in this world very familiar indeed, yet lacking definition; at least very hard to de-

fine in terms exact and clear; such things as force, or space, or love will suggest my meaning. It is so, I think, with religion. This, for example, is a religious community; we have known religious things all our lives, and yet, did I ask as I am now asked, "What is religion?" I suspect that did each speak his own thought, there would come a multitude of varied answers, or, as is more likely, none at all!

'Religion, at least as we know it, is in itself an idea so wonderful, so beautiful, so comforting in all the experiences of human life, so far-reaching and full of life and promise, that he who knows its gracious ministry is content, and never dreams of definition of any sort. It is as when the father loves his son, the mother her child; she knows not why: it is natural, and so religion is natural. Travelers say there are no peoples without some vestige of religious feeling; no human soul so dark but that, on approach of but a simple ray of light from any source, it kindles into flame.

'There is, accordingly, individuality in expression, description, which at length is definition. Religion is God-given, communicated directly to some privileged members of the race and by these delivered to the world; religion is natural, innate to the human mind, stirred to greater and greater clearness with the progress of human intelligence; it is an inspiration, "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; it is a gift, brought to each individual soul; it is universal, part of the constitution of things, wide as the realm of thought.

'More particularly, religion is a faith; a creed; a form of worship; a moral power; a philosophy; a theology; the sum of all philosophies; a mystery; a course of con-

duct established by ceremony, rite, and rule. It is each of these and all of them, because each and all have found a place in the spiritual life of man.'

Again the preacher stood silent for a moment as if oblivious of all about him. It was indeed but for a moment, but yet so long that Mr. Ramsgate felt for his tuning-fork, and began turning the pages of *Carmina Sacra*. He was standing back by the schoolhouse door; few seemed to notice him; certainly not the speaker for he presently went on:

'As I run over in mind the phrases I have just uttered, not one, as I think, not a single one, seems to meet or completely answer the query we have started; not one rises to our own high plane of expectation. Perhaps we are too particular; each phrase as it comes again to mind appears descriptive rather, and seems to answer, indeed, the question "*what* is religion?" rather than the question intended, I am sure, whose answer would tell us perhaps what, in fact, religion *is*; a very different question I believe!

'Only a few years ago two French priests in the interest of their church made a weary journey through all Mongolia and the mountains of Tibet, by the great wall of China. These men, Huc and Gabet, tell a fascinating story. They found everywhere plenty of religion. They found a religion God-given — so claimed; they found faith, and creed, and form of worship; they found a philosophy, a theology, an organized church, a mystery, a course of conduct, established by ceremony, rite, and rule, so much so that the missionaries could not fail to note continually the resemblance to their own procedure, yet the people were ignorant, debased, oppressed, bound in fetters as of iron; their manners bar-

barous, their priesthood their oppressors, parasitic, otiose, deceiving and deceived; no beauty, no art, no science, a situation incredible; difficult for us to imagine, as for the missionary to describe; a people religious to a degree, and literally perishing, passing off the earth by very rottenness! Evidently religion is something more and other than we have yet described.

‘We are a Christian people. All our traditions are Christian and bad as we are, and badly as we sometimes behave, we still insist upon the superiority of Christian teaching. In no particular point perhaps does that superiority shine out with lustre more distinct than in the answer to our question — doubtless in the minds of many of you all this while — which I am now going to quote. It was written some nineteen centuries ago by a man who walked some years, perhaps all his life, with the greatest of all religious teachers, not the “Light of Asia”, but the “Light of the World”: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”’

Just as before the speaker having said so much stood silent, abstracted, as if reflecting upon the words he had thus quoted, then—

‘This definition is indeed remarkable in many ways. In the first place, you will notice, it is not in any way suggested by thoughtless humanity, but is definitive, goes right to the heart of things, as does every other word reaching us from such far source. Not one word about creed, or church, or priest, or ceremony, or philosophy, or any of these man-discovered technical things; nothing even is spoken of a temple, whether it should be built of stone, dark within to promote a sense of re-

ligious awe, or merely the shadow of a tree in the full glory of a prairie day; nothing about religious machinery of any kind, prayer-wheel, font, or chalice; but a simple, direct statement, like "thou art the man!" addressed to the individual soul!

'Listen! the religion here discussed is *pure* religion; not something obscured and clouded by all sorts of discussion, argument, or practice; not even religion in general, but *pure* religion; literally something that has been purified, cleared up, reduced to its lowest terms, unmixed, "undefiled" in the *sight of God the Father*! Oh, how pure that is! *Pure* religion is this, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep *himself* unspotted from the world"; absolutely a matter of life, practice, behavior, and just what every sensible man approves. For the moment there are in the Universe but three spiritual entities — God, one's neighbor, and one's self — and a man's religion is his own attitude of mind; such recognition of God as results in a life of purity, such recognition of one's neighbor as leads to whole-hearted, unselfish service. That is religion!'

Again the speaker stopped; stood still and saw now straight before him the shadow of the giant tree, all fore-shortened by the fast-encroaching noon-tide sun and spread in lacy net-work athwart the faces of his people.

He mused. Long were it to tell though brief to see the content of a moment's time, so swiftly fly man's speedy thoughts wrought by the flitting shuttles of the brain. He saw indeed before him men of all shades of faith and some perhaps of none; he saw the face of suffering; he saw the little child, the commonwealth yet to be; he knew the sincerity of these simple minds; nay,

he saw much more; memory in that moment, brought him instantaneous visions all his own.

What stream is this that flows so softly swift between its limestone cliffs fair as of marble, now hung with broad festoons of scarlet creeper, splendor repeated in the glassy waters far below? What trees are these that toss their gold upon the river, strewing as well the path that winds amid their boles? What mother there? What all unheeding child? To-day, no doubt, the waters still are running swift to bear their argosy of leaves — but, where those happy figures moving? ‘Like as a Father’, he muses, remembers; he does not quote, but like a flash a query comes: had he now met the question of the morning? or had he indeed all but missed religious *love*, and so blocked the path to hope and peace? He remembered!

‘That definition is ideal’, he began again, ‘but after all is not, as might perhaps appear, impossible for that reason, or at least not impractical. On the contrary it is helpful in every way; if for nothing else, simply because so inspiring, pointing to that which is undeniably highest, something at last definite because ultimate. Like the sun it is, perhaps; we can not reach it, can not match it, may not even behold it with uncovered eyes, yet is it nevertheless surpassingly beautiful, surpassingly pure, surpassingly useful; does it not light our way!

‘Oh no; to refuse our definition because ideal would leave us poor indeed; there is nothing to take its place. Besides, all best things *are* ideal; the very word proclaims that fact, they can not be *real*, *i.e.*, solid, physical things that we discover by some sense of touch; oh, not so at all! They are ideas; in thought we shape them, suggested it may be by what we see, but ideas only still

are they. Sometimes, in solid form or figure, something like them we set out, to give the thought expression; but even then, our setting forth must oftenest be defined, described, to aid, to help our art inadequate.

‘Mr. Snyder says he can make a cube but it never will be true. No man may make a surface smooth! Nevertheless, ideals are fine; they tempt our supremest effort, and they perish not! An ideal, the Elgin marble brings to view. The stone may be broken, marred, and spoiled in all sorts of ways; but for the discerning spirit the ideal shines, hangs like a living essence all about the mutilated figure, not to perish, we may well discover, so long as lives one sentient soul.

‘If then, with all our striving, we can not realize an ideal line, or surface, or picture, or statue, not even a cubical block, shall we be surprised if in conduct we fail to realize the highest things, the soul’s ideals we know not whence, long loved and cherished as we love and cherish all things of beauty, things we call divine!

‘Here now is the service of the book we call the Bible. Here is the story of conduct’s supreme ideals, as we say; sometimes exemplified, sometimes set out in formal phrase, more often suggested as in every work of highest art. Listen — “The law of the Lord is perfect”, that is, ideal; “the commandments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether”, ideal. No law among men is perfect, none at all; but we can think of a perfect law that should meet every recurring case, in justice flawless.

‘So with the ideal of religion. In the long history of this world, no man has ever realized it, though many have felt its power. None ever was, or has kept himself, unspotted from the world; if he did he would be unworldly, belong to existence of a different order. Con-

ditions permit it not; conditions not of our making, but with which in presence of each ideal we have evermore to do: pillared or cloistered sanctity not to be named!

'The author of our definition knew this well. He seems to have been a man of passion, like to others; the fierce Tishbite is cited in his closing sentences. Christianity at the outset was a Jewish sect; and we may easily guess the kind of torment all his life our author suffered from the tongues of men. The familiar bitterness of domestic and religious strife was his. No wonder he denounces the sins of speech in language elsewhere unrivalled in literature of men. If any man offend not in *word*, the same is a perfect man; "but the tongue can no man tame".

'Then he praises patience; if patience "have her perfect work" "we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" but for example he has nothing better than the endurance of the old-time prophets; the ideal always fails. Finally he cites the patience of Job, and the tenderness of the situation breaks in upon him, the only hope, "the end of the Lord . . . very pitiful and of tender mercy". "Like as a Father pitieth his children." Then he recalls that in his definition he had written, "and the Father"—or was that an after-thought, not until now inserted above the line? It sounds like it! At any rate, until now the thought had received no consideration, the whole epistle so largely denunciatory.

'But here the temper of his letter changes: the author muses; he recalls not the Father only, but as would seem, an "advocate with the Father", a man who walked all the hills and valleys of human experience; loved the earth, the sea, the mountain, the flowers, little children, women, men; opened the gates to endless possibilities

foreshadowed, perhaps imaged here; sent the prodigal to the arms of his waiting father, and the hopeless, helpless woman on to freedom by the benediction of his peace.

‘God is without shadow of turning, but *we can turn* and then the very elements of spiritual life meet, in counterpoise more exquisite than those of Newton’s law; mercy finds mercy, the pure heart, vision — the primal terms of our definition, be it noted. Seek righteousness and have it, forgive and be forgiven!

‘James felt it as he mused; recalled even the service of song, and the efficacy of prayer; even the Tishbite prayed for rain; and the “*law of the Lord is perfect that it may convert the soul!*”

‘Here the letter ends, very abruptly. No subscription; superscription, benediction there is none. The author rose from his table, left his manuscript perchance unfinished, and disappears totally in the night of centuries and things forgot. But still after eighteen hundred years his pictures glow, and his definition shall be forever!

‘Friends, in its deepest sense, religion is an attitude of mind, and each man’s faith his own. As such he alone, if any, might give it utterance or expression. In what has been said, I use the words and thoughts of another to suggest the content of my own experience.

“‘Pure religion in the sight of God *and the Father*” taught me as a child to say, “Our Father which art in heaven . . . For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory”—the splendor! Who is this King of Splendor, of Glory? The Lord of Hosts! He is at once the King of Splendor, the King of Glory, and the Father of all his contrite trusting children! Amen and Amen.’



A SOD-HOUSE

FROM A CHARCOAL SKETCH BY EDITH BELL

These last words were uttered in a fashion so stately, so fine, and with such evident depth of feeling, that his hearers were over-awed. He seemed as one enraptured; his hands as before were clasped, his vision directed forward, his face illumined. As before, a moment he stood in silent meditation and then quietly sat down at the old tree-base ere his hearers quite knew what had happened. No one ventured to move, until at length, in querulent stage-whisper, the single syllable 'Pa-ap!' broke the spell, and our tardy chorister, to the strains of *Old Hundredth* and its doxology, set us free.

While others looked, Mr. Dennis and Mr. Lyon came up and thanked the speaker. Mr. Dennis said he had never read the book of James but would, no sooner he got home. Mr. Lyon on the other hand proposed to build a church. 'Build a store', said the preacher, 'and a bank instead'.

Mrs. Lyon reported that she took the old gentleman by the hand and thanked him over and over for the inspiration he brought to her; not that she agreed with all he said, but simply because she knew he believed it, and, what was more, lived it! She asked for his notes saying he must have written that address. She reports that to what she said he paid little attention. He made some explanations, talked to her about the kinship of James, brother of the Lord, as having influenced his argument; and she finally ran away to join her husband.

When the old man at length turned to take hat and cane, he found himself alone; his people were scattered on the silver meadows. He stood watching as here and there, startled betimes by the wild hen's summer brood, family after family disappeared from view.

V

MISS BLEW HAS A CALLER

So was our schoolhouse builded and such was its reverent dedication. For their own instruction and for their children men hewed and piled these logs, and to fulfilment of such purpose high, the structure long endured. Indeed to tell the further story of the 'prairie-college' would record perhaps the history of a community entire, for years and years; almost until this day, when, of those who planned and toiled, not one survives. Here was our civic center; everything here had place — schools, elections, conventions, festivals, sermons, lectures, debates, everything which concerned the social, the intellectual life of men.

On Sundays in our seven months summer, the little building rarely lacked a speaker. These were the days of prairie splendor; everything beautiful, everything new, everything almost free. Long before the great tides of home-seekers began to move across the river, the orators arrived; visitors seeking the proverbial hospitality of the pioneer. Did we not greet adventurers of every sort? Came men of every school and profession, and men of none; lawyers with, and lawyers without knowledge of the law; doctors with spectacles and saddle-bags that showed signs of service, and others without such insignia, distinguished merely by title claimed, further substantiated betimes by lengthened hair, by curls and unkempt beard; preachers with white stocks and others with black, or none at all; men with collars that buttoned in front, or now and then a rare

individual for whom in ways obscure the white band blended on the opposite side; short men with broad hats, and tall men with high: — all these, in numbers, in our season of beauty moved each his own way across the garden of God, each attended by his shadow; and when at the season's ending he disappeared, to 'return next year', as he sometimes kindly advised his confiding, though dubious host, each, for us, melted into the land of shadows whence he came, and we thought of him no more!

All these men were talkers: the men who made homes looked on, or listened. However, now and then a traveling lawyer found a farm, or a preacher loved a grove — and stayed. Was not the quiet Mr. Kibbuts a man whose ministerial dignity had somewhere risen to public notice in Pennsylvania, as was believed, and Mr. Dennis, neighbor of Squire Marks, 'took up land' beside him — was not Mr. Dennis more than once suspected of a knowledge of Blackstone? What then were the leather-bound books, reported by the hired-man as visible on occasion in the Dennis cabin, if not a set of the immortal *Commentaries*? Judging from our neighbor's occasional emphatic eccentricities of speech, religious commentaries, such as those affected by Mr. Kibbuts, such they were not — they surely could not be!

These men, however, seldom appeared in public; they were quiet farmers, like the rest; the transient it was who brought a message. At the schoolhouse it was men heard his voice as of one crying in the wilderness, and Sunday after Sunday thus went by.

As time sped on the number of such willing orators increased betimes, while the number of Sundays in a prairie summer varied scarce at all. Was not Mr. Simp-

son, patient, permanent president of the school committee, compelled to register those applying? The yellow, faded, much be-thumbed pages of an ancient record may possibly yet be seen, whereon for curious readers the names of that old-time array of candidates waiting turn were plainly all set down.

For his own protection—and for ours—the owner of that book was wont to insist that every applicant must come ‘well recommended’, presented by some permanent resident as sponsor, his name recorded too; and yet, the list in certain years out-ran all possibilities, and many a would-be orator on approach of frost hied him southward or eastward, bearing his undelivered message with him—alas! to oblivion, it is now gravely feared, and the prairie was left to resources, voices, of its own.

Nor among these forsooth, all apart from human volubility, was eloquence altogether wanting—eloquence of the quiet sort, more patent, subtle, not only where the October landscape spread forth its pristine beauty on hill and valley, silver and brown, scarlet and gold, but also where wagons creaked through fertile fields, and happy farmers piled heaping high the annual golden hoard: no utterance more fortunate, more felicitous than these!

And who may tell of sunny Saturday afternoons when whole neighborhoods, with waiting tubs and baskets, thronged, by creek and river, the orchards primeval; excursion meet for Sunday’s offering of praise. Had not the frost enriched the rosy and the yellow plum, sweetened the wild grape cluster, and even mellowed a little bit the forbidding crabs? All these went home in bushels, loads uncounted, to liven the ‘bouquets’ of mid-winter. What memory can bring back imaged to the

expectant sense of taste, the lost sweetness of those wondrous fruits!

And music! This while, on every side the pipes of Pan were playing. Did we not have myriads of screaming birds, the repertoire quite different now from that of spring, assembled in cohorts vast, the swarming clans darkening the very sun? What strange, perturbed psychology was theirs, all rushing now in curious haste to disappear behind our southern border? Oh, yes; in eloquence the prairie had resources of its own, even when the black coats and brown coats, broad hats and tall hats, black ties and white ties, all had fled the field!

But at the first, Father Blew was, as Mrs. Lyon said, 'the inspiration of the whole community.' Not every Sunday did he speak; oh, no; only occasionally, when there seemed some special reason; never, when other speakers wished the place.

But, on the Saturday following the famous sermon, Miss Blew had a caller.

'Where were you last Sunday, Miss Blew? Your brother talked to us, and it was just grand! Why weren't you there?'

'Well, for one thing, I wasn't invited', said Miss Blew.

'Neither was none of us; but you had ought to have been there. The people was that taken with what your brother said, that they forgot everything else; even Pap forgot the doxology. I do believe, if it hadn't been for me, they'd all be sittin' there yet, with Pap leanin' up against the door-post.

'Pap says he never heard anything like it since that summer when the preacher-brother was here from Indiana; you remember. You know *he's* very acceptable to poison-ivy, and had it very bad, and had to go back.

Well your brother's something like that. Pap says, as far as he knows, he was orthodox, too, as far as it went. Somebody else must say; I suppose it was, but I don't know as it was.

'I think I'd like it better if he had preached on something else. I never did like to hear a man pick a verse to pieces-like. I always take the Bible just as it is; what I can't understand don't effect me much nohow, and I reckon the Lord is not likely to write some of it over again just so as we can understand that part, when He knows as well as we do that we don't none of us half live up to what we do understand; I think that is plain, don't you Miss Blew?

'I wouldn't spend so much time just to say what religion *is*; I don't know as I know now just what it *is*; all I know is, I've got it; got it when I was young; got it under Elder Hapgood, the most spiritual man you ever did see. Why Miss Blew, that man couldn't eat in summer, and in winter he had to stay in the house almost the whole enduring time!

'But there was plenty of rejoicing in that old man; a good deal more than seems was in James. *He* was a Jew anyhow, Miss Blew, but that doesn't mean he wasn't well-connected. "In David's line", Pap says, but he didn't have a speck of the old King's music, who when not fightin' was singing considerable of the time, as would appear.

'Elder Hapgood was that way. He kept it up even when Peter Cartwright was preaching one time he did, until everybody was shouting "amen and amen!" and Brother Cartwright just came down out of the pulpit and said "Brother Hapgood, if you're going to run this meeting, you and I had better just change places and

I'll show you what I can do to you, or I'll just show you now!" Brother Hapgood was no match for Cartwright, so after that he kept more still-like, but there surely was a great deal of praise in those days: yes, there was, Miss Blew!

To all this and more, Miss Blew made small response. She led her caller to a little garden, all enclosed by palings tall, and showed her late blossoming marigolds, inclined to bloom again, so mild the autumn days had been that fall. 'Do you think we'll have an open winter', she inquired, 'if so I'll have fresh flowers.'

'I am no prophet, Miss Blew; the wild geese kept me awake all last night, honk! honk! honk! all night long, which folks do say is a sign of a hard winter. Pap says it is a sign that it has been warm so far, as it has been, but has now turned cold up north where the geese are flying, flying from the cold; they're late, and noisy; but all kinds of geese get fooled sometimes, Miss Blew.'

VI

MRS. RAMSGATE

MRS. RAMSGATE was no doubt critical; such the temper of her mind; but very proper about it, too, was she, voicing her own opinions, not without deliberation due. Definite conclusions she gave us, *ex cathedra*, and once uttered and spread abroad, as such things in a properly constituted rural community always are, they passed current quite often as embodying the sense of the neighborhood at large. This notwithstanding our critic's perfectly evident lack of educational preëminence. With Hoosier schoolmasters, such as more recently have come to fame, her acquaintance in Indiana must have been of the briefest; but a plain woman's common sense she did show, betimes abundantly, and although apt to be somewhat intolerant, her frankness and perpetual good nature made up for all defects and gave her among her neighbors willing audience.

That year, long ere for us the marshalled wild geese came sounding the trumpets of the sky; long before the serious time 'when', as all men know — 'icicles hang by the wall and Dick the Shepherd blows his nail; and milk comes frozen home in pail'; long before we saw things like that and all wise men took warning, the log schoolhouse was beautifully finished! At Mrs. Lyon's suggestion her husband had brought from the mill a load of bright bass-wood boards. Mr. Langstraw made a close-battened ceiling, a storm-door, and a porch and by the time Mr. Mitchell had chinked the walls with clean, white mortar, outside and in, the whole structure

was just about as fine as fine could be. Evening in winter brought the added attraction of artificial light from the wide-mouthed flaming chimney and from tin reflectors, fastened to the walls, where tallow-dips in sufficient numbers did obeisance, alternately flared and sputtered, but still emitted useful light.

Large as it was, the room was never large enough for public functions. Intermittent at first, public assemblies presently were almost as frequent in winter as in summer, especially on Sundays. The old-time formula for announcement when such was made gradually changed: 'Providence permitting' passed easily to 'weather permitting' — *Jove favente* — to our intellectual ancestors probably much the same thing.

As to morning program in winter, the judgment of Mr. Langstraw prevailed. Did sun-dogs gleam or blizzard rage, he judiciously stayed at home; but were the outlook promising in the least, even though the landscape were covered with snow, Greenland never whiter or colder, the faithful carpenter kindled an early fire. As it died away Mr. Snyder resumed the task, piling logs until the furnace roared; and by such 'pillar of cloud' the people moved — if they so preferred!

To be sure under our varied ministrations — no reputable topic taboo — discussions economic, political, religious, were provoked sometimes to pitch undue. In politics the atmosphere was electric and men were careful. In religion every shade of faith, almost of no faith, as Mrs. Ramsgate thought, found airing in the schoolhouse, trying no doubt the patience of some saints.

'Why Miss Blew, that Universalist man we had at the schoolhouse last Sunday does not believe in hell! I would feel better if he had told us he believed in *heaven*!

That's what I want to make sure of, Miss Blew; the other place is in the world, a good deal of it, right now; we know that for a fact! He was pleasant-spoken was that young man; he'll know more as he grows older. It's because there's so much hell right here all the time, that we think there must be somewhere something better. Life on the prairie seems better, Miss Blew, just as we make it better, and leave the good Lord to take care of the world we none of us know — *not as yet*, not yet, not yet! He is a fine young man, I hear, with his fair face and blue eyes; I liked him as did the rest, but he knows very little of this world and no more of any other than an adventist does of the millenium, which is not very much now, as does appear.'

The reference to the millenium was prompted by the appearance, a few weeks before, of a 'disciple' of William Miller 'in faith, but not in figgers', as our critic at that time remarked. Miller had argued the end of the world in '43 or '44; but the disciple cited certain irregularities in the heavenly bodies, 'erratic comets and such-like' putting things awry, so that our time, in the course of two or three thousand years has gained, and the date should have been set at 1867; no doubt of that.

'Pap was some taken by the millenial man; but I told him he had better, so long as he could, just go right on farming, the best he knew, till the corn was all in in 1867; for there might be another loose comet or two: these things might be delayed again, and we might, if still living, have to spend the winter on the prairie. He hasn't talked about it since that time, as far as I know.'

It was Indian summer, just before the school opened for the winter, that our first phrenologist reached us and the use of the schoolhouse almost for a week was

his. Of his 'science' many of the prairie people had never so much as heard. Representative of Fowler and Wells, with abundant pamphlets, books, and charts, a glib speaker, withal, a minister *soi-disant*, he would have preached to us forsooth on Sunday, but his application came too late, to the disappointment, no doubt, of some.

Night after night, the house was full, first at ten cents and then fifteen. Did not the mentor in our civic palace hold each day his solemn court, issuing, not without consideration due, charts in the name of O. S. Fowler, *duly signed*; drafts on the future for each lucky boy; life's highway stretching on, visible, as usual, chiefly here and there on *heights only*, anon disappearing beyond some attainment point, to be marked again on peak remoter, higher still. Or, through mistaken identity, was it now perchance some *other* man's triumphant way the prediction followed, where in the distance dim, glory caught the expectant, all inexperienced eye?

It mattered not; according to the artist each had somehow entered fairly the old-time 'house of Life' ascendant. The fancy of youth was captured; in many a manly heart ambition stirred; and doubtless beyond the meadows the noblest visions rose, even hovered above the handles of the plow — at least, for a season!

'Have you been over to hear the free-knowledgers, Miss Blew? I was there last night! Tell it you, it's something great! I laughed in spite of myself, though it's all very solemn, you know. Pap thinks there's maybe something to free-knowledge. They make out its fore-knowledge, kind of prophecy-like, you know. Pap says he can tell, himself, whether a colt's goin' to be good for anything or not, by the shape of his head, by just looking him in the face; and he thinks you can tell

whether a man has horse-sense anyhow, by just looking at the squint of his eyes. "There's nothing to him, when his eyes is set too close together", says Pap. He says he could have told which was the smartest of the Kibbutts boys before the free-knowledger got his hands on them at all; but now he doesn't know as anybody can — those young chaps are that stuck up! Every one of them is going to be president of the United States, I reckon, one right after the other, hand-running. And our William! Pap says he don't know as he'll ever be good for another lick of work; he just goes around as he was thinking about something, all the time! The man says something nice about everybody; but I think they'll all be over it by and by; there can't be so much goodness in one neighborhood. It's like truth, you know; in this world there's not enough of it to go round!

'But, Miss Blew, those spirit-rappers and table-tappers that was here last winter, they want to come back, I hear. They are the worst yet! They are something terrible, I think. Pap says there's nothing to it; sleight of hand and fraud; but I don't know. There's enough in the Bible about those kind of things — witches and such like — to make me a little nervous. I don't believe a word of it nowadays, of course. Witches is all gone long ago. They must have been some, or they wouldn't have killed them as they did; so there ain't any now; but they do say the Indians have some, and there are some in cities.

'But the people that were here last winter told how all the people that have died are right close around us, and we could talk to them sometimes because they are always trying to talk to us. They can't talk words because they're spirits; they have no bodily parts, you

know; no tongues; but if we ask questions they can answer; they knock under the table or back in the cupboard somewhere. What I can't see is how they manage to knock the furniture, if they are just spirits. They'd just as well talk, as go on making signs like poor dummies, seems to me.

'Besides Miss Blew, I don't like the idea of them bein' around anyhow, at all!

'When we was first married I had a neighbor that kept coming around at any time of day, "just to look in", she said; into the kitchen she came, or the sitting-room, anywhere I happened to be. I declare Miss Blew, it bothered me so, and made me that nervous I was pretty near plumb crazy. I got so I jumped whenever a cat crossed the floor. I don't want nobody peeking around to see all the things that I do, much more if they have nothing whatever—that we know of—to do themselves, and can spend whole evenings rapping out to the public, what we poor mortals, working for a living, have to do. Sometimes though, they write!

'Miss Blew, the good Lord knows best when folks ought to go. We can often see that He is just right in the case of some of the people we know. But when we do go, I think we ought to stay, and not be all the time nosing around as if we wanted to get back! I don't believe the folks we'd ever want to see again, ever do such uncivil things.

'The only time I ever went to a spiritual meeting was last winter with Pap. The man was very kind. Somehow he had heard our news. He asked Pap would he like a word from his brother, dead then a couple of months or so. Pap said he would, but he wanted it writ out. They had two slates tied together and a stubby

slate pencil inside. We all sat there very still and after a while you could hear that pencil scratching! Ugh! It gave me the creeps: I can feel it yet, Miss Blew. When they opened the slates there was something sure enough; very bad writing, but there it was: "Mount Zion without fale."

'It seems there was to be a seance up at the Mount wherever that was, the next Saturday evening, some special demonstration-like, and the man — *medium* they called him — said it was to meet Pap's brother there. Pap read the words and then we got up and lit out. Pap 'lowed his preacher brother knowed how to spell, anyway: "He never wrote 'fale'; if he did he's failed mightily himself, since he left Indiana", said Pap.

'Now, Miss Blew, I don't want to say a word against spiritual things; but I want to be sure about them. I don't see any use of a medium anyway — a sort of go-between-like, as if folks was quarrelling. If Pap's brother is a spirit now, he was a spirit when he was here. Pap set a great deal of store by that brother; and it does 'pear to me that if there's anything to it at all, two loving spirits might manage to get together, if either one wanted it, without any clumsy stranger getting in the way or pretending to help.

'Oh, Miss Blew, nobody can help! Oh, Miss Blew, I am spiritual myself! You don't know what I know, what I have felt. In Indiana long before we came west, I had a little daughter; yes, I did! She was a most pleasant child. She could sing! You have no idea how that child could sing! everything she heard. Before she could fairly talk she would repeat, "O say can you see-e-e" and point with little finger to the open sky. She was our joy and gladness and all our little sorrows fled away.

But one day she took sick, very sudden, and the next day she was gone.

‘That was long ago; but still I see her often. Oh no! not in the night-time; no, not in dreams. Sometimes in the evening, when in the firelight I sit alone, knitting or mending, a tiny figure sits beside me on a little stool, or behind me from the trundle-bed I hear a little voice, back in the quiet corner-shadows: “Hush my babe lie still and slumber!” Or sometimes in the bright sunshine in the garden where I’m working, I hear behind the green wall of blossoming peas—I hear a song: “By cool Siloam’s shady rill”. Oh no, Miss Blew; I’m not disturbed; I’m glad! I’m *so* glad! I hear that little voice! I know, of course, she isn’t there; it’s memory, I reckon; but it’s a memory will meet me again some day, I’m sure of it!

‘Why Miss Blew, memory is all there is to it! If I didn’t remember when I was a child and all the way along, it would not be me. I shouldn’t be anybody as I know of; I shouldn’t be anything more than a tree or something like that. As far as I see, a tree just goes on doing the same things over and over again; might live forever and not know it, so far as anybody can tell. Might dream a little sometimes in the summer when everything is so very still; so they say, for it is always alive, isn’t it? Oh, the floor of heaven can do no more for me, Miss Blew, than to let me hear that little voice, just *all I want to*! Oh no; not here, not here; but there, where “fields stand dressed in living green and never fading flowers”.’

Miss Blew sat very silent for a moment; she did not even look up; but when at length she raised her eyes she was alone!

VII

THE STOICS

IN after years, Father Blew's advice to Mr. Lyon became doubly efficacious. In the first place it forestalled the erection of a building for the use of a denomination wholly unequal, numerically, to its proper service, the proposed builder and his family being the only representatives on the prairie of his particular form of Christian faith and practice.

In the second place Mr. Lyon's efforts were directed to an enterprise in which the entire community promptly and richly shared. Lyon's store became almost immediately our center of market and trade. This as a matter of course.

But all apart from the purchase and sale of goods or merchandise, about the building itself certain phases of our social life gradually crystallized, just because they could. The upper story, reached by an outside stairway, offered across the front such simple offices as a farming community might be naturally expected to need; one for the builder's personal use, and, of course, one for Dr. Willowbush, community physician and surgeon. True, his practice did not much interfere with his ordinary work on the farm: a little fever and ague, accident at almost any time, and the general custody of the public pulse, to whose regularity the fact of the doctor's mere existence contributed not a little.

Beyond the offices was the hall. Here the wonderful American passion for organized social effort and amusement found free course and opportunity. Here Odd

Fellowship sometimes carried up its silver platter; later on, Masonry hung up its mystic charts; and, not least interesting of all, here in due time Good Templars told of Father Matthew's triumphs and found no lack of followers. Here Mike Lafferty was in his element, for did he not wear one of Father Matthew's *medals*!

All this went on upstairs; all to be expected; constitutional, so to say, in a community of Americans; but meantime to our social life and history the floor below lent day by day contribution not less interesting, and of importance hardly to be overestimated.

For lading and unlading, across the building's front, extended a covered platform broad and deep; and here during half the year, every pleasant evening saw various representatives of the neighborhood assembled from near and from far — for minor purposes of trade, to be sure, but for the exchange of wits, the barter of all sorts of intellectual and social wares no less; gossip rising to the plane of news, or descending to the more popular level, to mere homely jest. Here the grown-up children of the market-place alternately mourned and piped as they have done in all the recorded and possibly unrecorded story of the race. Long, much bewhittled benches and boxes afforded for the less active convenient lounging places; were there not seats also in the old agora, and even — is it not so set down? — even on 'Olympus the derisive!'

Often in a pleasant summer twilight, Father Blew strolled from the opposing slope to join his neighbors; and, once upon a time, by some strange conspiracy of friendly spirits, found himself beneath the awning wide, confronted not only by a crowd unusual but by a great wooden chair, his name athwart the back in token not

alone of prospective ownership, but of simple affection and appreciation. Had not his suggestion made possible the schoolhouse? The store itself, and how much else? What did they, these men of the frontier, *not* owe to the kindly spirit of one kingly man!

Father Blew once referred to the informal assembly gathered beneath the awning, as 'the *forum*, the parliament of the porch' and ever after, that was the official name. Once Davie Baird suggested 'Stoics'. The word was recognized as Scriptural; but its mention on the porch was a mystery; it seemed so entirely foreign to the subject. What could the grinning farmer mean? Father Blew knew, and his eye twinkled as he fondly looked at Davie.

However, as the days went by, sessions of parliament became quite regular. Lyon's store became a country post-office and our stage from the steamboat-threaded river came every other day. Men congregated to greet possible passengers, to see an occasional weekly newspaper, the '*Trybune*', the *Inquirer*, or the *Observer*. Other titles were sadly significant betimes, with or without the hyphens — the regular '*Counterfeit-Detector*', the '*Bank-note - Quotation-list*'. For our very protection, when possible, were not these posted, literally nailed to the door-post, every other day!

At the forum Mr. Lyon was, of course, a regular attendant, if at home. He was one of those rare men, who, having large concerns, never make these a matter of general conversation, even though he could talk well and in his speech use many a happy metaphor to the pleasure of himself and hearer. Father Blew knew this; few others did. Men thought Lyon morose, which he was not; he was reticent; said 'yes' and 'no' with Quaker-

like abstinence, and brought to the parliament almost its only 'flashes of silence', so much so that when conversation flagged sometimes, men looked up to see if Mr. Lyon was in his place.

Because of his quiet, dignified habit, Mr. Lyon was called 'The Judge', at first in pleasantry to be sure, at length habitually, and newcomers never thought to question the authenticity of the title. He was withal a great lover of horses. His stables were almost the only structures worthy of the name, then upon the prairies, almost the only structures needing not an annual renewal of the slough-grass roof. Mr. Simpson had a great bank-barn for cattle, but Mr. Lyon had stables for horses, for Morgans — horses for beauty, for intelligence, endurance, speed; horses that might carry their owner to the river in an hour or so and back again forthwith and never know it. Gaily colored pictures of Ethan Allen and of Dexter with his four white feet hung framed in Mr. Lyon's barn, and in his office unwearied red-coat hunters, in train of panting hounds, chased an imaginary or perchance just vanishing reynard, forever round the walls. The progeny of Bashaw was in the stalls; the breed still lingering, perhaps, on wealthy western farms.

In the parliament of the porch the attention of our pioneer moralists was presently engaged. Mr. Ramsgate insisted that the bringing in of fast horses would lead to the ruin of the youth of the community; that already his son, Hosea* could talk of nothing but horses; that all sorts of 'fast' behaviour went with fast horses. Did not the very word find on the race-course its untoward and bodeful meaning?

But the discussion of the problems ranged wider than

* Pronounced Huzzy.

the porch-rim. Indeed, as was sometimes whispered, many a wise conclusion proclaimed perchance with kingly confidence in the parliament, really took origin in the spokesman's cabin, where shrewd wife or mother held, as now, 'the casting vote.' 'Initiative and referendum' are mouth-filling words, perhaps look well in legislative print, but to no man brought up on the old-time prairie is the idea for a moment new. In those days when the men were slow to listen, or to understand, the women talked to one another; always to universal interest; and presently, in such a case, by some singular mental telepathy, unreckoned of the philosophers, all the men were talking too.

However, Mr. Ramsgate's vigorous protest amused those who had chanced to hear how only the Saturday before, Mrs. Ramsgate had found opportunity to make a call on Miss Blew and had incidentally mentioned horses.

'You know, Miss Blew, we had a fine horse once ourselves, back in Indiana. He belonged first to Pap's doctor brother; and when brother died, Pap got Marquis, and did set great store by him. He was fast, but just that nervous that Pap and me could scarcely drive him at all; couldn't drive him with nothing else neither; he was splendid to look upon, but he couldn't plough corn!

'Pap always liked a horse, you know, and when Marquis would put his nose on Pap's shoulder, he stroked the fine neck with his fingers, and that horse's lips moved, his eyes shone, all over his sleek sides went shivers like shadows, like the air on a warm day in summer!

'He certainly was well-formed, was Marquis — pretty

as a spring-morning and full of stir, like when the bob-white is calling and the partridge answers with a whir. But in the spring our Marquis took sick and in a few days died. The doctor said it was lung-fever, or maybe it was pneumonia; he wasn't sure. Anyhow such a horse is liable to have the same diseases as people have; just like a human person, they always die.

'Now our Hosea is keen for one of those Lyon colts; but I do not think a fast horse agrees with a young man anyhow, and I told him and Pap so.

'When it comes to buy a new horse, I told the men not to buy a high-priced horse on no account, as they was apter to die; and then where was all you paid for your horse? So I just told the boys to just get a horse as was only moderate spiritual, and was sound; one as Pap could drive to the river and still get back with inside of two days. You know Pap can't see none too well, —'

Just then the arrival of another caller cut us all off from further information of the sort; but Miss Blew, and perhaps other ladies, thought they could henceforth divine the Ramsgate sentiment concerning horses.

When on the porch the subject came up again, Father Blew happened to be present. He explained that good horses were not necessarily trained racers. Nothing of the sort had developed on the prairie. Oxen had done their part in breaking the sod. Now, to keep good horses would cost no more than to keep poor ones, and would greatly contribute to everybody's joy.

'What delight our young people might have in coursing these far-sloping hills! They can not ride plough-horses. You just wait a little, you older people; there'll be use for nice horses and ponies.'

It was recalled that a side-saddle hanging by one stirrup on the wall had been noticed somewhere at Father Blew's and a companion to it, brought all the way from Philadelphia, a saddle with quilted seat and broidered side, was hiding somewhere among the cabins and cyclopedias of Squire Marks at this very hour.

Such was the manner of the men of the prairie; thus were wont to deliberate the 'stoics', 'the forum', 'the parliament of the porch'. Hosea got his colt!

VIII

OPELLAE FORENSES VERNALES

ONE evening in the later spring, when the breath of May was in the air, when all the roads were drying, when the bright green of the hills was just beginning to show a tinge of summer's inflorescence, when the prodigal cottonwood had at last ceased to cast upon our streams his golden dust, when the violets were under foot, when from every rocky cliff columbines first were swinging silken tassels above our heads and the new pale leaves of the aspen shining were just learning their far-predestined dance, when day emboldened first began to linger in long triumphant twilight, the forum of the porch assembled in overflowing session! Everybody was in happiest humor; fevers and colds, the plague of winter, especially of winter's ending, had largely disappeared. Every man congratulated his neighbor upon some felicitous circumstance, worthy of mention now, however inconsequential at other times.

It was 'corn-planting time'! Mr. Dennis was congratulated because the soil was in fine condition; Mr. Ramsgate because his oxen were in full strength, so that he and Hosea had been able to turn over more than two acres every day for a number of days; Mr. Lafferty, because his ponies, moving on the green hill-side, looked as if washed, so clean and bright were they, the winter's coat all cast, manes newly trimmed. 'Ah', said the happy Celt, 'it's the ponies themselves that do be kaping *Easter* this spring; they're none the worse for that, the scamps that *they* are!'

Now, Mike, as usual, was perfectly right. Thanks to the tilted axis of the planet, he saw the living world renew its life in spring and put on its glad Easter garments. The farmers shared his sentiment, though probably few understood his immediate reference; no more than did he the far-off beginnings of such universal joy, in which faith and fashions, flowers and ponies long have shared to the pleasure of half the world!

Meantime, Squire Marks received all sorts of compliments. In the preceding autumn a railway line had been surveyed across the prairie not far away, and Squire Marks, our man of science, had been a constant attendant as men of tape and compass had moved across the low hills, around the wider swamps. Late in the winter the whole country-side was stirred to great enthusiasm on hearing how a locomotive had come to Iowa, the first across the Mississippi! Hurrah! Hurrah! Our Squire was present and saw the engine wend its way by a bridge *of ice* across the stream! The Squire was congratulated!

Glory enough for one man; was such a thing ever heard of? The engineer for driving the machine along the uncertain way received a twenty dollar piece of gold! Wonderful wage! This was almost as marvelous as the commercial feat accomplished. Mr. Lyon or Mr. Simpson might have had richer experience, but many a man on the prairie had, up to this time, never seen so much money at once; at least not in gold.

But the engineer got his gold; and our Squire saw the locomotive come! He learned even its weight and speed, and computed, at least to his own satisfaction, how thick the ice undoubtedly must be to bear such a burden. Unfortunately the winter had been throughout extremely

cold; the ice *was* thick; thicker by far than had by Mark-sian computation been required; and the mathematics of the prairie remain to this day unconfirmed. And, on this very evening now before us, the Squire had, to be sure, important matters to communicate. Had he not recently reported the local *variation of the needle* — which we all knew varied not at all — ‘true as the needle to the pole’, everybody had heard that. Was it not the metaphor supreme to tell of constancy, devotion, loyalty itself? Variation of the needle — impossible! The Squire is a pretty good man, but he should be more careful of his reputation!

But the student had other thoughts. He even went on to set up in his very dooryard a prairie boulder bearing across the top a line to mark *our individual* true meridian; let the very constellations and the stars take note!

Alas for human constancy! It, too, has indeed been sometimes known to vary! If the needle varies, then, perhaps, our familiar simile is after all more accurate than we thought, true as the needle to the pole and — *no more so!* If only now the Squire does not disturb the polar star, and set that changing! What if the polar star should prove unstable, then we *are* lost! Unless, for star as for needle, there come method in the instability, as the Squire more than hints betimes — if — the parliament understands him! Still, of course, we should have the Squire’s mark upon the rock! Such were the musings of the men of the prairie.

To-day the Squire stood waiting; he had news; but Mr. Jordie Bracken had the floor!

Now Jordie, among his loving friends, was more frequently known as ‘Shorty’, mispronunciation slight but

constantly suggested. Like Father Hue's bounding Bomba, he was a dwarf, but with little accompanying deformity, with no ill-health or weakness, legs unduly short. Feet, indeed, made walking possible; while the body itself full grown, erect, supported a normal head with smiling face, and the arms of a powerful man, long enough — so reported — for use as crutches, hands upon the ground! By telling strange tales of service as oddity with one Phineas Barnum — whom, of course, he had never seen — he sometimes delighted to mystify curious strangers.

He was clever, very musical; could sing; the delight of many a parliament when ordinary discussion failed. Thus it was the prairie came first to know *Nancy Lee*, *Suwanee River*, and, later on, *Kingdom Coming*, *The Vacant Chair*, and all the wealth of music with which freedom's war began, and found at last an end.

But he was a busy man. He and his brother, Tennessee, owned the stage-line; were *ex officio* reception committee for arriving strangers! On a little farm not far away might be seen their sheds and stacks, stages, coaches, wagons, transfers, many retired from routes 'back east', in variety to charm an antiquary. Jordie left steamboat service to have charge of this.

On the river he had as an assistant a colored man — no, a *black* man, surely blacker son of Afric's Adam never rose or fled from Niger's shadiest banks! Paddy Whitecotton, the name he bore. Patrick? Not at all! *Paducah*, if you please; the Mississippi, the only stream Paddy had ever known.

Jordie liked the black; and to the prairie, on terms known only to themselves, came black and white together, the black man free!

From steamboat service Jordie brought many stories; some rude, unwelcome on the prairie. But the stage-driver was no dolt; quick to learn how the crudeness of the court of the second Charles, the 'glorious restoration', was not tolerated on the prairie, he never offended with steamboat talk after the first time.

However, on this vernal afternoon in the riot of general gratulation, Jordie must tell a story while our man of science waits! Paddy as it turned out played by no means the second rôle.

'One evening last spring', began Jordie, 'a very important man, looked like he owned the whole prairie, came riding to our gate, with about the poorest-looking horse you ever did see, especially for such a fine man. Paddy noticed it; 'lowed a man that would *steal* a horse like that ought to be hung; not for stealing, but for poor judgment! The rider called for lodging. My brother said yes; took him to the house, and turned the horse over to Paddy.

'Paddy took good care of that horse. When led out in the morning, the steed looked immensely better; in appearance, at least, hardly the same old horse. The man looked at his recovered mount and then at Paddy:

'“You black rascal! Is that *my* horse? Are you sure that's *my* horse?”

'Paddy answered very slowly: “Well, sah; I don't know, sah, if it is your horse. In Kentuck when in the morning a man doesn't know his own clothes, they put him back to bed again. I don't know what they would do with a man who didn't know his horse! I think they would say he'd better buy another horse; one with blue eyes perhaps, so he'd know him in the morning. I don't know if this is your horse; you ought to know that, sah.

He's the horse you brot to the barn last night: that's all I do know, sah! Yes, sah!'''

The applause was loud and long; but our raconteur had suddenly slipped from the porch.

Just as suddenly, above the din, some one chanced to catch a single word — 'railroad' — shouted it aloud, and the crowd was quiet in a moment — not Squire Marks indeed, but Mr. Simpson, now it was, who exclaimed: 'Railroad, railroad sure! In time to haul all our corn next fall; *sure!*'

There rose just one shout! Men sprang from their places; pushed each other from the porch; chased one another around the building; threw their hats away, wrestled, laughed and shouted again; and, more to the purpose, one or two enthusiasts even took horse to spread the news far as they could ride. Were they not young, and spring already here!

Only the young endure to wage life's battle and only the young can win! Only the young cast life and energy away! Is not each the son of eternity? Strange heritor of power unknown, how shall he such wealth withhold? How shall he wait the lapse of years? Already he transcends! greater than 360° his circle; let him shout!

Mr. Simpson's word was law; but where was now his partner? 'Where's the Judge?', cried some one. All eyes were turned; the place was vacant! 'Sure, and he's been gone a week entirely', said Mr. Lafferty, 'he's not at home at all, at all. When he left he said, —'

But hark, oh hear! Just then, from the top of school-house hill, came sounding the most musical tone of all the prairie, the winding of Tennessee Bracken's horn — 'The stage! The stage!' Mike's sentence never found completion.

IX

THE STAGECOACH

THE stage, that thrice in every week closed at Lyon's store the active day, and as often opened business on alternate mornings, with its schedule slow, became in time the very symbol of precision and punctuality. The sun itself might betimes be slow, but never Bracken's coach; and, if in good weather the stage was not on time, report of serious accident was painfully expected.

To the gossiping company on the porch, the mail's approach was always heralded. No matter how vigorous or how interesting the general discussion, some one always had the stage in mind and hailed its advent. By virtue of the topography, approach was visible long before arrival. In winter, unless whelmed in drift and fog, the sidelights first twinkled over fields of snow at Snyder's farm. In summer a cloud of dust betimes revealed what it concealed; but in spring, with skies washed, and air transparent, even the old Concord-red took on new beauty, to waiting eyes; horse and carriage came bodily out to view. Squire Marks could see the driver on his seat, and Davie was called sometimes to guess the rate of speed, the amount of lading, and various other details affecting prosperous progress. All this by the seeing of the eye. But in fair weather, as in foul, the one sure, real signal of the mail's approach was the sounding horn! For, be it known, Tennessee had a bugle; the same forsooth which once upon a time did cheer blue-coated soldiers, climbing the sad, but glory-crowned heights of Chapultepec and Churubusco,

and set the echoes flying all about the rocky hills that girt the old-time 'seats of Montezuma'. With inspiration such as this, might not the bugler blow, might not the very prairies listen! The echoing horn of Tennessee had seen true service brave and far!

For the stage, evidently the military 'calls', each bringing to the practised ear well-known syllabic utterance, would hardly do. Each appropriate to particular time or circumstance, would, at least for a soldier, seem subject to profanation if turned to such service as might befit a common carrier, called to stop anywhere, at almost any time; to deliver anything — a spool of thread to Mrs. Duthie, to Mr. Landsman, a father-in-law from Illinois! At any house, from the river to store, the obliging stage was wont to stop, and everywhere the sounding horn made summons, generally instantly obeyed. Accordingly, the driver invented for himself a call. 'I'm coming for *you!* for *you*, for *you*, for *YOU-U-U-U!*' Whether this it said or something else, Tennessee himself did not know — or maintained that he did not — but whatever the message, always was it welcome.

Lyon's store, as the end of the run, was honored by a double summons: the first at Snyder's farm, a mile and a half away, where, as we have seen, the vehicle might first be glimpsed; the second at the schoolhouse corner whence the road followed a gentle declivity for some eighty rods, then crossed a bridge of boards only to ascend a corresponding hillside, near whose summit stood the store.

On this particular evening so great had been the interest in Mr. Simpson's message that the first warning had passed unnoted or at least unheeded. But at the

first note of the second call, recognized as such by the nearness and clearness, every one turned to see the 'common career', as Davie liked to call it, come up the hill.

'She rides light, she rides light', said the Squire, as the vehicle crossed the bridge, 'there's no passenger on her this time, I'll wager.' For a few minutes no one disputed the Squire's conclusion; every one seemed busy trying to form an opinion for himself. At length, Davie, who could ill endure a positive from any but himself, made answer. 'She lists a little bit. There's some one on the off side just behind the horn.'

'Maybe it's freight for the store, or a casting for the sawmill', said some one. 'Or seed corn for Mr. Lyon', said Mr. Simpson.

'Maybe Stephen A. has been making speeches; maybe there's a new compromise coming', said Mr. Dennis with a sly look at Mr. Snyder, whose partisanship was quite as extreme as that of the Kentuckian, but in the opposite direction.

'Is it seed corn it is?' said Lafferty, not at all pleased at such suggestion; 'and me the whole week long shell-ing seed corn for Mr. Lyon. No sir! no seed corn!'

Seed corn was usually an interesting theme, but not this time, the farmers evidently very curious, the freight-age of the slowly arriving stage, so far beyond surmise.

'Whoa!', said Tennessee, as he set the brakes and wrapped the lines around the stem; 'Whoa!' and he sent the diminutive mail sack over the dodging heads of the crowd, and clean through the open door beyond; then without a word, climbed from the driver's seat, walked a few steps along the platform, threw the stage door wide open, exclaiming: 'Lyon's Store!'

As he spoke, he lifted his hat and extended his hand to a solitary passenger who rose from the opposite side of the coach, came stooping through the low, open door, and stood upon the platform, the tall stately figure of a comely woman, keen, black-eyed, straight and strong, simply dressed, but quite in the fashion of her time. For a moment she stood in the silence of astonishment and surprise. The far-stretching, almost treeless prairie, the scattered farms and cabins, the lone white storehouse, the assembled farmers, rude, youthful, but bright-eyed — what could be more surprising to one entirely without knowledge, without experience of such a scene!

Nor were the onlookers less amazed. Involuntarily these stepped backward, gathered in a semicircle round, men peering above each other's shoulders; several removed their hats, Beauregard and Lafferty first of all; all silent. The lady spoke.

'Is this, then, Lyon's store?'

'Yes'm; this is Lyon's store', said Bracken, still standing at her side, utterly at loss as to his next duty, but quite conscious of continuing responsibility. 'Yes'm, this is the store.'

'An' where is the clachan? Or the kirk?'

The sound of that dialect wakened Davie. 'There's no village, Madame, nor yet a church, though one is building; this is all there is of it. There's the schoolhouse, Madame; you just passed it; the community is all about us.'

On the prairie, the lights and shadows of the closing day in spring are especially impressive; the lady could not but notice it.

'Weel a weel! It's a fair land and ye are a' good folk; but where is Robert then; he should be here?'

To this inquiry, there came no reply. Davie, who alone began to comprehend the situation, at length ventured: 'Which Robert, Madame?'

'Robert Maquhyddr, my guid man, of course, he should have been here long ago.'

'I have known men of the name in the old country', said Davie, 'but none here. Where did he come to?'

'Illinois.'

Noting the lady's evident embarrassment and alarm, Davie made no attempt to tell the geography of the wide valley; he simply said kindly:

'He's win out,* no doubt, never fear; but such ways we have this year, it's small wonder he's not here. Does Robert ken no one in Iowa?'

'Mr. Lyon is his friend, I hae heard him say. Is he here?'

'He is not, I'm grieved to tell it; but surely will be soon.'

'If Robert's not here and Mr. Lyon's not here, I'll go back to the river as soon as I may.'

'Na, na Madame, you'd better bide where you are. It's Sabbath to-morrow; you must wait till Monday to take the stage. Ye'll be well cared for somewhere.'

The lady was perplexed. 'But I can not stay here on the wide moor; who will gie me a bit supper, and a clean room? I'm a very wearie woman, with the long way and the tumbling wheels.'

'You're welcome to any house on the prairie; you're the guest of the community; but you'll best go straight to Mrs. Lyon. The way is short, the house is large, the fare is good, and the lady kind. Mr. Lafferty is here

* He will win out.

and can guide you safely over the hill. He's here on foot; can you walk a half-mile? I don't know?'

'Indeed can I, and will. I am wearie of wheels altogether.'

To such arrangement Tennessee quickly assented, assuring his passenger of the comforts awaiting her in Mr. Lyon's house, where she would see the 'finest room in Iowa'. 'The stage can not go over, but the luggage will follow soon.'

'Jordie! where's the trunk? Clear the stage-top and drive to the yard! Bring back a cart, and we'll have the lady's baggage across the creek long before it begins to be dark.'

Jordie, who had long since brought the trunk from the stage-rack to the platform, and who had been standing all the time close by, now came suddenly forward, and began to climb the stage. By use of his powerful arms, with absolute ease, he threw himself to the driver's seat, clambered to the roof, and began tossing to his brother such packages as he found.

'Jordie, Jordie, ye're no doubt a spedart,* but take care, take care, or ye'll surely fall. Certes ye'll ne'er be shut up in a fiddle or a pie for the pleasure of a King; ye may be thankful for that; but will you now have the kindness to give me my small portmanty; it's for that I'm fearing?'

Enough of this was generally understood to provoke a laugh, the rather as Jordie had at the very moment laid his hand on a large black traveling-bag, which he

* Spider. This allusion to a spider's hand-over-hand athletic activity was understood by Davie alone, and had to be explained later, as it was, to the satisfaction of everybody, Jordie included, who regarded it as a compliment.

delivered immediately, and with all due care, to the hands of his taller brother.

Tennessee forthwith summoned Mr. Lafferty, placed the portmanteau in his hand, gave him all necessary instructions, and started him in charge of 'the guest of the community' on the road to his employer's house.

The way to Mr. Lyon's was not long, 'a good half mile', Mike said, by the road over the rising ground on which stood the store; but it was long enough to enable two honest, but mutually embarrassed companions to begin a most favorable and, as it turned out, long enduring acquaintance. To avoid muddy spots in the straight highway, Mike took a circuit upon the open hillside across unfurrowed prairie.

The sun now just below the horizon still glorified the world with the afterglow of spring; but certain following clouds, themselves unseen, interrupted the retreating rays and barred the heavens entire with alternate beams of light and shadow, spreading from the soft-illuminated center of the west. 'A very foolish sunset', Whistler might have thought, but none the less, it caught the attention of our guest, and she stopped still to scan the landscape wide, asking the hitherto silent guide if on the prairie such displays were common.

'Do ye often see the like of that?' she said.

'It's not beyont the beyont, ma'am, when we have distinguished visitors', said courteous Mr. Lafferty. The answer pleased the lady and she spoke again.

'Ye're no so dull as ye might be; "there's whiles convenience", said Cuddie, "in *looking* a wee stupid".'

'Stupid is it? That's a young bosthoon, with not a bit of sinse in his head at all, at all', replied the guide.

'Ye must come from Ireland; ye have the gift of

pleasant speech. I love it here; I would stay longer, but I think we shall have a shoor.’*

The dialects were not a little confusing, but Mike rallied, grasped at the cue, replying as far as he could comprehend:

‘Sure and I did ma’am, and a swate country is the green sod; but it was the west light that called us all then, to take a rise. Across the wather we came; perhaps it is for that same herself is here?’

To the stranger’s ear the boldness of the query was a little softened by the uncertain metaphor; but before she could reply, a brooding prairie hen roused no doubt by the unwonted sound of voices near the nest, rose almost at the lady’s feet, passed like a shot before her face, with a whirl of wings of itself sufficiently startling. Fairly frightened, her trepidation was in no whit lessened, when the flight of the first seemed to set in motion the wings of a dozen more, whose size and swiftness left the beholder quite astonished. The flight was short but to the intelligent observer, none the less wonderful.

‘*Nomine domini!* what are those?’ said the lady, as the birds, with heads erect above the grass, stood now clucking, only a few rods away, visibly, beautifully barred and speckled, in the evening light.

‘Prairie chickens, hens’, was the reply; ‘they do be brooding and hatching out everywhere now.’

‘Chickens, chickens, they can not be; patricks** they are. This is quite our lowland birdie, very fine!’

Mr. Lafferty was familiar enough with the word ‘patrick’, but a little uncertain as to this unusual application of the name, and accordingly in his courtesy

* Shower.

** Partridges.

held his peace. The couple walked on in silence, the lady evidently perfectly happy with everything she saw.

Mr. Lyon's house was now plainly in view, a white, two-story structure, with a tiny white porch, a lawn with not a few little red cedars planted here and there on the hillside. Just in front stretched the valley of a stream — Bushy Creek, Mike called it. A frame bridge, the only thing of the sort in the neighborhood, loomed large, because its single truss was lifted high above the now slowly moving current. As the lady walked down the slope, the very wealth of prairie life was all about her. A flock of golden plovers accompanied her down the hill, nor did they fail to surround her as she descended toward the bridge, moving amid the springing grass with stately steps, stretching up slender necks with plaintive cry, as if in doubt whether or not might be unfriendly this strange invasion of their quiet. Once only was the lady fairly startled. She heard close at her side a singular whistling rattle, shrill, sibilant, staccato. She sprang at a bound far in the opposite direction, exclaiming: 'In Heaven's name! now *what* was that?'

Wise Mr. Lafferty was never more discreet.

'It's a queer little bird, ma'am, we have on these prairies; rare at this time of the year; you'll probably not hear another this evening, but in summer they're plenty, and ye'll have time to see them then. They have no feathers at all, at all.'

Mike had noticed his companion's fondness for birds. But once upon the bridge the stranger stopped; weary as she was, and much as she longed for that comfortable-looking house on the quiet hillside, she could not resist the charm of the wild beauty that spread far as eye

could see. The whole creek valley was an untouched natural park. Here and there the stream, flushed with the waters of spring, widened into marshes that now shone as lakes; graceful elms and clustered willows were still mirrored faintly in the waters; while scattered all up and down the marshy flood-plain were giant cottonwoods standing isolated here and there, glistening in the very newness of their just completed foliage. Thickets of crab apple adorned all borders with the beauty of their bloom, while the only less attractive hawthorns in full splendor marked the rising meadows of native grass.

But the birds! Did any one ever see such multitudes of birds? 'The whirryin' things, ilk thrangin' ither', she afterward said. Robins on every bush, and here and there a call or snatch of song; catbirds of such fantastic garb and habit; thrushes, grosbeaks, jays, kingfishers filling the air with their screams; herons, sitting like listless dolts amid swarms of tilting snipe and piping tringas; and ducks blackening the water, or darkening the sky in flight; bats and falling night-hawks dropping from the upper air; while far away lost in the white mist that now began to creep along the plain the bittern distant boomed, and whippoorwill piped to whippoorwill the weird notes of his resounding, syllabic, and delightful call, sounding still when all other voices of the prairie died away, the final echoing flourish of the serenade of spring!

Mr. Lafferty by no means inattentive to his companion's pleasure was also not unobservant of the gathering mists and clouds which might obscure his further progress, and so, with the true courtesy of his kindly nature, he ventured to remark:

'An sure Ma'am, it's not like the sunset; the birds do be flying every night, and in the morning they're no fewer; there's no end to them, at all, at all.'

The lady immediately took the hint, and the walk of a very few minutes brought the travelers to Mr. Lyon's door.

X

THE HOSTESS

THE hospitality of the pioneer was proverbial. Better than that; it was kindly and it was genuine. When Davie told the arriving stranger that she was the guest of the community, he told what everybody knew was strictly, though not formally, the truth. In days of old, the welcome stranger of distinction was met at the city gate by the warder, bearing, on graven silver platter, keys of gold. These should typify the freedom of the town with its resources all, its widest welcome as if in token of surrender.

Such procedure, however, conferred after all but reception formal—stated permit and privilege. But Davie's welcome proffered, in the name of his neighbors, more by far than golden keys convey; nothing less, in fact, than the good-will of every home in all the valley, with all the keep and care the owner might bestow upon his own.

Tennessee himself, of course, usually entertained arriving passengers—but always with discrimination when he knew or guessed their errands. Ministers he sent to Father Blew, cattlemen to Mr. Simpson, and so on—always with the proviso that the stranger so preferred.

But over all the country-side the law of the prairie ran—open house to any man at night-fall, seeking shelter. The cabin might be small; but whatever the accommodations the stranger was always bidden enter, to throw blanket or 'buffalo' on the broad stone hearth before the fire, to sleep till morning.

But in many a cabin the second room was a 'spare' room with a spare bed for *guests*! Nay more; in the better houses there was generally a half-story garret, with a window in each gable. Sometimes this floor constituted for the rooms below the only ceiling. To it the younger members of the family had recourse night after night, year in, year out, ascending and descending by a ladder hung upon the wall, almost vertical, for economy of space.

As in the firelight's glow on some winter evening long, the traveler with the elder people sat in quiet converse round blazing logs, he might often see the ladder put to actual use, its rounds pressed by naked youthful feet! At such a time, he thought, perhaps, of that other famous wayfarer of long ago upon whose vision rose, above a stony pillow, too, a ladder tall; its rounds to bear angelic figures, descending, ascending, the very messengers of heaven! Perhaps ere he lay down upon the hearth to sleep, his host would read just that very story of a traveler's dream!

At dawn, the stranger rose and went his way. He had no bill to pay; but often left on mantle, table, chair, some bit of silver in token of appreciation of the courtesy received. These coins in turn constituted no inconsiderable factor in the currency of the community. About the middle of the decade a traveler now and then left a gold piece on the cabin table, and *it* was not refused.

However, on the present occasion, the novelty of her experience, the beauty, the strangeness, the wonder of it all had so occupied the community guest's attention that personal relations had for the moment ceased to impress her mind. But when at last her escort, hat in

hand, knocked at a stranger's door, the sense of her situation all at once came down upon her, overwhelmed her with trepidation and embarrassment. Here she was, coming unbidden and unannounced, to a woman whom she had never seen, of whom she knew absolutely nothing, to be a guest! The sun was down; she was alone; other recourse now was none in a world wide, wild, unknown! Small wonder the color left her cheek, all her courage fled away, and strong woman that she was, she trembled, seized the porch post lest she sink upon the floor.

Fortunately she had not long to wait. Her coming was not unexpected! From the window the lady of the house had marked the two upon the way. She had not failed to note the halt of the lone woman upon the lofty bridge; and the tarrying there had not only lent ample time for any needed personal preparation, but had given a shrewd New Englander much insight into the character of the approaching guest. She recognized in brief, not only a stranger, but one entirely unused to a situation strange; her predicament, her habit, her whole manner, and behavior revealed something quaint, unusual, and Mrs. Lyon really was glad to see her coming. Here was something new! The door swung quickly open and the very happiest, cheeriest face looked out in welcome.

'Come in! Come in! I'm so very glad to see you! I've been watching you a long time. I saw you on the bridge. I'm so glad you came to me, and that some one else didn't get you! Our supper is almost ready. You must be very tired; but we'll take good care of you. To-morrow is Sunday and you shall rest as long as you choose. You love birds and so do I. Our prairie is

simply wonderful, and the flowers are coming. You can stay just as long as you like, and be glad with us. Come in! Come in!

All this, spoken with great rapidity by the hostess as she led her guest into the house, was simply for that poor woman the last surprise in a day of astonishment. It left her speechless. She sank into a proffered chair and uttered — not one word!

As if anticipating no reply, her gentle but quick-discerning hostess went right on.

‘That was a very trying journey. I know how tired you must surely be. Please allow me to take your cloak, and until after tea may I ask you to remain just as you are. Then later when you are a little rested we may climb our narrow stair.’

‘Unco wearie; I dinna deny it — but my certie, your kindness, Madame, is too great for words. I am a total stranger. I am only a few weeks from Belfast. From New York I took a long journey up country to Pittsburgh, and then on the steamers to St. Louis, to meet my husband who has been in the United States now ’most two years. He met me there, maun* go back up-country to meet a Mr. Lyon; and so he set me on the boat again, to come here where he would surely meet me. But he’s not here; I ken he’s gone somewhere, but where?’

It was now Mrs. Lyon’s turn to be surprised; but again her womanly kindness prompted reply and not inquiry; and she merely said: ‘Oh! that’s it. If he’s with Mr. Lyon, he’s all right; we shall see him in a day or two; Mr. Lyon went to Illinois. Please just rest a little, while I set the table for tea.’ And she disappeared.

The better houses of the prairie, whether of logs or

* Must.

framed, were the product of the local woodland. Logs were cut by Mississippi's banks and along every tributary stream. The great northern forests, which later were to cover Iowa with houses and barns of clear white pine, had not yet learned to move in rafts gigantic along the creeping currents of the river. When the farmer bought his prairie, he purchased somewhere else, even miles away, a bit of forest to have wherewithal to build; and to find supply of fuel; other yet was none.

The industries of men were also by this fact determined. The farmer for each season had a special task. If in summer he planted, tilled, and harvested his crops, no less in winter must he toil among the trees; logs for lumber, tree-tops, the fire-wood of a year.

Nor were the industries of winter less agreeable. Daylight hours were few; the forest miles away; and if the task be done at all, travel back and forth must be without the sun. Accordingly, on a clear, cold morning, when the earth was white, and hundreds of steel-rimmed wheels went crushing the crystals of the snow, the prairie roads an hour before sun-up or an hour beyond his setting were not without their music heard from far!

The favorite trees for the mill were oak, walnut, and linden; these for general construction. Maple, cherry, linden, and hickory were also cut and sawed for the man of tools and skillful hand, to create the furnishings of all our homes. Great factories had not yet deprived the individual community of the beautiful service of the artisan, each in his individual useful trade — blacksmith, wagon-maker, cabinet-maker, side by side.

Had we not Mr. Snyder, already named, and did we not prize the pieces he had fashioned, jealously comparing chairs and tables with those made by Mr. Lock-

wood in the Quaker settlement, not often to the advantage of the Friend!

House-furnishings were, however, generally very simple. In almost every cabin some piece, or pieces, might be found, of course, brought from the earlier home, but commonly 'split-bottom' chairs, plainly constructed, walnut or maple chests and bedsteads were the best the prairie could afford.

The Lyon's frame house, in which we have seen our lady safely seated, was built of lumber such as just described; the frame was oak, the siding walnut, very thick, each individual board beveled and made smooth by hand; the roof of walnut shingles, Bob Langstraw and Mike Lafferty had split and shaved them every one. Except that it was larger and had two full stories, Mr. Lyon's dwelling was identical with any one of a dozen others already upon the prairie; but his furniture—Ah! that is a different matter!

Mr. Lyon's fondness for good horses served of course to cover, at least slightly, with a shade of suspicion anything else in his procedure which his neighbors deemed unusual. In keeping with his love of horses was his appreciation of fine cattle; he liked fine sheep, pigs, plows, wagons, nor less anything else which met his idea of value. In this peculiarity, his neighbors really could find no grievance; he was the market; he bought anything offered for sale, from a bushel of wheat to a piece of prairie, and paid the price!

He liked anything which could be called good. He liked Governor Grimes because he thought him a good lawyer; Mr. Arbuthnot because he said he was a good preacher. But, when once upon a time, he brought back from the St. Louis markets a clumsy Spanish bedstead,

purchased at auction-sale* and set it up at home, the circumstance occasioned remark widespread, rising almost to the proportions of a scandal which neither the suavity of Father Blew nor the good humor of the people could ever quite allay. At the parliament from that day forth, Mr. Lyon's 'masterpiece' became a matter of humorous, not quite kindly critical reference, ceasing not with years.

For reasons now no longer to be readily recovered, the product of the lathe for our prairie artisans had peculiar fascination. From rolling-pin to bed-post and mantel-shelf everything was dizzy with suggestions of the wheel, turned to excess; 'beauty adorned, of beauty quite bereft'. Of bedsteads, every possible part was delivered from the carver's spindles. The knobby posts, as if urns and spheres in sequence joined, would make the would-be sleeper dream; the rails cylindric smooth, at either end continued as a screw, thus to engage the post. For head and foot, vertical decorated spindles, with many a curious knob and ring, made rusticated panels, held in place by other screw-turned end-rails just below. Such bed as this was thought a triumph of constructive skill, and to own one deemed almost luxurious on the prairie. But the Judge's bedstead, *that* was different!

It was a curious bit of misplaced splendor; '*genuine four-poster*', people called it, perhaps mahogany, brought originally, from some far southern or even island home. The heavy posts, by Mr. Snyder's art, carried at the top light joining-rails, from whose moulded edges curtains might depend. The headboard and

* *Vendue*, our people said and pronounced it *vandoo*. Perhaps this came with the Louisiana Purchase too.

footboard, carved by the tool of some cunning Bezaleel, showed sculpture, a singular pair of wing-like scrolls, base to base with tips extended, measuring, perhaps, half the panel's width. Similar but longer and more slender pinions stretched, one adown each rail, on either side.

Mr. Lafferty had trouble with those posts. 'Sure I'd rather be settin' them up down-stairs, than settin' them down upstairs; and if I'm kilt entirely its yerself, ma'am, will be takin' care of me bed-ridden the rest of me life.'

But the decoration — the men of the prairie, readers of one book and steeped in its strange imagery and symbolism, pretended to find the curious carvings interesting. Davie and his friends were full of teasing comment. Emblematic those wings must be. Carved thus upon a bed, these must be the wings of night, and not the wings of the morning fitted for journey far. But what bird of *blessing* ever cycled through the darkness, or over-shadowed even in dreams the repose of night. Davie knew of none; he tormented Mr. Lyon.

Squire Marks shared the fun, declaring: 'Wings in human story, have more than once been strangely united and conjoined with lions! Even our neighbor's Christian name lends fitness. Does any one doubt it, let him consult the patrons saint of Venice and study her coat of arms. *Mark* my words!'

Father Blew was, of course, appealed to. He said the scrolls were merely ornament, had no significance of any sort. If they were beautiful, that was enough. Art does not require explanation, and while carving, like poetry, is generally intelligible and gives pleasure, after all, 'beauty simply is.' But Davie objected; named

cherubim and seraphim and all that sort of thing, quoting: 'With twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.' 'This', he said, 'describes the situation perfectly; the pinions are accounted for, every one.' Davie was a scamp anyway; everybody knew that.

To the real beauty of her husband's purchase Mrs. Lyon meanwhile had by no means been indifferent. She was a housekeeper; had graced a fine establishment, had such fallen to her care. Moreover, she sympathized with Mr. Lyon in all his varied enterprises, all his plans; and yet, had she been consulted, it had never occurred to her to bring to the prairie such piece of southern folly as should attract the notice of the community entire.

She had no place to put it, 'nothing to go with it'. Her furnishing was that of her neighbors, no better, no worse. She had respect for the feelings of her friends! Her sympathy with all the women of the prairie was very real; alike in the calm nobility of their common enterprise, their constructive labor, the building of a new community, new homes and institutions, and in the hardship and privation, personal sacrifice and toil, which that enterprise must of necessity, continually entail. Above all — though not a member of the society — she had the hidden instinct of the Quaker, a personal, perhaps subconscious aversion to superfluity and display; yet, she loved beauty, in nature and in art, and foresaw, as did many another, the wealth that must one day come in fulness to the fields on which she toiled!

However, 'Make the best of it', was the law of the prairie, long ago approved. Mrs. Lyon proceeded to curtain with simple drapery the gift unsought, thus to diminish a prominence unseemly; at the same time she draped the windows looking eastward; hung her only

mirror on the wall between, disposing other furnishings to a general scheme; and offered to the world, at length, a guest-room, pure and simple, the only thing of the sort in all the country-side. Its service to the community was immediate, generous, and never questioned, surviving long.

In Mr. Lyon's house the ceilings were unduly high; was not such the fashion then approved that, windows all unopened, sleeping mortals in winter might have air! A hall crossed the entire width, and from one side arose the simple stairway, turning across the rear and again ascending to reach a hall above.

Up this narrow, gently sloping stair on that memorable Saturday evening passed Mrs. Lyon with the community guest. It was now quite dark, the two ladies having taken advantage of a simple, though protracted, tea to form each the other's more intimate acquaintance. A brass candle-stick supporting a white glass globe enclosing a large sperm candle had been lighted on the table ere the meal concluded; and when at last they rose to seek the room above, Mrs. Lyon went before carrying a single taper which served at least to pick out the stairway, but otherwise simply made the darkness visible. She had taken precaution to light the guest-room, so that, when at length she opened the door and ushered in her guest, two candles in two brazen stands burned on a simple table below the mirror.

'Madame! Madame, this is beautiful! For days and days I have seen nothing like this! And yon!', pointing to the curtained couch, 'a Spanish bed to be sure; where did you find the like of that?'

The hostess explained. She even detailed the interpretation put by the neighborhood upon the emblematic

'wings', a feature which curiously had already made a special impression on her guest. She, recalling what so lately had caused her admiration from the bridge, exclaimed: 'This is surely the land over-shadowing with wings! Wings fill the air of evening, and wings in the furnishings for the night, who ever heard of aught finer than that! To the weary stranger, how very significant! pinions shapely! Theirs is an ancient concept, true indeed; theirs a legend very old: "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings!"'

'Davie somehow never thought of that', said Mrs. Lyon.

'Davie was perhaps never in my peculiar situation', said the guest.

'Sleep well and long!' said the lady of the house. 'To-morrow is Sunday. You may sleep late or rise early, as you think best; there are no noises but bird-songs on these meadows, save where the milk-cows in the morning sometimes slowly range away, and now and then you catch the tinkle of their distant bells.'

So saying, she said good-night, closed the chamber door, returning not without commingled thoughts and feelings to ordinary cares and duties on the floor below.

XI

MORNING ON THE PRAIRIE

Now, notwithstanding weariness, and in spite of all comfortable and favorable surroundings, 'the guest of the community' could not sleep. Her general sense of isolation and loneliness, her strange predicament, where, notwithstanding every kindness, every factor in her future seemed perplexing, problematic, and uncertain — all this kept her from that peaceful mental attitude, without which even utter weariness refuses to be consoled; the brain refused to the weary members sleep.

She looked out by the open windows and saw the eastern skies full of their glory; this alone seemed natural.

She saw the great dipper, the 'plough', she said, precisely as at home, with his pointers directed to the pole; the lesser bear she saw, by tail-tip turning on his long-accustomed round; while far below Regulus glittered as of yore in the great lion of the sky; the golden sickle facing west, prophetic now, had she but known of harvest, oh what harvest! on far, unfurrowed plains; harvest, golden harvest, splendor dimly dreamed! But all the glorious constellations that she could there make out, familiar though they were, were silent, cold, and far — my lady was alone!

Below and immediately before the house she sought the bridge she had so recently learned to know, the shining water of the stream? But the valley, if such there were, lay hidden, veiled in silvery mist, impenetrable, save as now and then a taller tree lifted its dusky head or perchance some higher point rose darkly from

a distant side; everything was obscure, everything dim, softly uncertain, silent, vague as her own surprising present, her immediate future. How could she wait the coming of the morning to clear the world, at least a little, alike for landscape and for her!

The world was silent, yet not without an occasional sound; this, unfamiliar. Sometimes there rose the rumble of a galloping horse as a belated farmer crossed the bridge or sped through the mist far along the sleeping valley; sometimes she heard the voices of men, of some one calling or replying as if entirely beyond the mist, on the other side of the world! On the prairie, voices of the night reach far! Sometimes the sounds were near at hand; the cry of a startled bird disturbed perchance upon its nest by some winged marauder of the night. Last of all she heard the sound of rattling chains as one sought for water down the dark hollows of a well. She heard the splash as the bucket struck the fountain; then the creaking links and the whistle of dripping streams as the bucket rose; she heard the final rush of the outpouring; then the stir, the voices of those who said good-night about the curb, and moved away, each to his own, the cares, the labors of a week at end. But she — she was alone!

Presently, suddenly, it was morning! Our guest could scarce believe; but lo! the sunshine fell flashing on her eastern windows, and, more surprising, she became conscious of creeping strains of music; it seemed to her that she was once again at home and she heard the volume of song in Fisherwick Place, where, on every Sunday morning the vast congregation stands in church and sings in unison. She heard the very tunes; she thought she heard 'Dundee's wild warbling measures rise'; she

heard or seemed to hear, Woodstock and all the rest. As the music continued she became thoroughly awake. Some one *was* singing; and as she now realized the full splendor of the daylight streaming across the floor she sprang up to listen to melodies floating full across the little valley no more obscured by mist but lying all resplendent in the light of summer morning. It was Sunday sure enough, and the people of the prairie were singing; no, not at church, since church there was none; but was not every house, each in its own way, a temple to itself, and many a household solaced the heart and filled the air with song!

But the lady was fortunate. Just here was the most musical family on the prairie; here were the Ramsgates — father, mother, sons, daughters — all could sing and sing well. The windows were open this summer morning and so all the fine chorus came swelling up, wave after wave to salute the waking senses of the community guest. The lady was fortunate — three thousand miles from home!

The effect of all was magical. Soothed and refreshed by sleep that did at last supervene — if tardily — cheered by familiar song, familiar airs, despondency fled away, alarm gave way to delight, to enthusiasm, even. Instead of being now a stranger in the wilderness, our guest was forthwith at home, felt herself for the moment a citizen, asking not even the formality of registration. She was so exhilarated and so pleased that she hastened down stairs to tell her experience, and to apologize for her tardy appearance. But once more her hostess forestalled her.

‘What a lovely morning’, she cried; ‘now you can see and enjoy the prairie. You have all the hours to your-

self to-day. You have no husband to please, neither have I; we will please ourselves; and I have so much to tell you, and to ask you!

‘After breakfast we may go down to the bridge; I want you to be sure to see something I’m watching there, and then from the bridge you may wander as you will; take a walk by the creek, or up the hill to the open meadows or survey the fenced-in fields; do just as you please. In Mr. Lyon’s absence, I keep the house in sight until Mr. Lafferty comes at noon.’

The simple breakfast was speedily out of the way, and the hostess rose, apparently as eager as her guest to see the wonders of the morning.

As they started forth, our guest found all surroundings full of interest; the open well with bucket and pulley, rope and chain, the water far below; some of the noises of the preceding evening became intelligible now; but the peculiar refrigerator-uses of the well — butter and cream suspended in the cool dark shaft — were indeed surprising, even amusing; and she laughed outright.

‘Who ever thought of the like of that? But such wells we have in County Antrim too, with a *windlass*!’

The stables built into the hillside attracted attention, but more the long, straw-built, grass-thatched sheds that girt the enclosure round on north and west. Beyond the sheds a thicket of trees now massed in bloom, robinias they were, row upon row, odorous, and, on this quiet Sunday morning, audible, humming with the sound of myriad bees. All this called for explanation; the locust trees had ‘an unco name’; altogether they formed ‘perhaps a park’ since they were extended far around the dwelling as well.

‘Not for bloom’, said Mrs. Lyon, ‘although as you see the bloom is fine, not for flowers, but for shelter are they set, to hold the drifting snow. For you must know we have winter here betimes; abundant snow; the wind rises, the temperature falls, and, in the wild storm, without shelter no living thing can stand before the cold.

‘You will scarcely believe it; but six months from now these prairies may be trackless fields of ice, all landmarks gone out in flying clouds of frost and dust, and man and beast must wait until the storm has spent its fury; then the sun comes out, the temperature rises, everything is beautiful winter again, and men say we’ve had a “blizzard”.’

As they talked they moved from the stables and locust trees to a new-made garden already showing in shining rows the promise of vegetables of every practical sort. A small orchard of bright-stemmed trees lay just beyond — ‘rambos and bell-flowers, Siberian crabs, with a few peaches all coming into bloom’, said the hostess, ‘an experiment; if we get just one crop of fruit it will pay; the trees will winter-kill perhaps; we’ll see’.

By this time the house was circled and the ladies once again stood facing the far-extended valley, the air clear, resplendent, every object even though by distance much reduced in size, yet withal distinctly visible.

‘All’s well that ends well’, said the guest, who had not yet learned that with Mrs. Lyon the end of the play was always well; that even for disaster there is either a remedy or — the end inevitable — ‘make the best of it’. Nor did the hostess tell her guest how far blizzard and cold did sometimes spell disaster; she merely went on to say that houses on the prairie were warmly built, sod-houses warmest of all, rude as they may appear.

'Mrs. Stillmore and her mother live yonder; you may well see, on the hillside, the house of sod; very cozy inside. You may see her straw-thatched sheds and stables, to be new-covered in autumn, snug for winter.'

'Hovels', said the lady from Ireland, 'hovels, hovels!'

She spoke in fashion half-surprised, half-critical, yet not unkindly, but the word hovels touched her hostess. She thought of England's, yes, of New England's, stately homes, of castles, palaces. Of Belfast she had from Davie only faintest glimmer, but she thought also of the hovels of the world, the wretched habitations of the desolate sons of men, the starving poor — all these things flooded her mind, but she fancied she understood the misapprehension of the stranger as she went on to reply: 'Thatched roofs do suggest the poorer habitations of Europe, yes indeed they must; in rural England, Scotland, Ireland, thatch is a common roofing I am told.'

'No, no; it's not that, Madame; these are not roofs of thatch. Thatch-roofs cover cottages indeed, houses of pretension, churches even; thatch, yes straw-thatch, well made will last for years; but no thatcher, I think, laid these roofs; they seem "heapit"; I should think the winter winds might "blaw" them'.

The hostess realized her failure; this time she spoke her mind.

'Somehow I can't think of a "hovel" as a fit place for people to live in', she said, 'the little houses you see, especially the log-cabins, are many of them very clean and neat; except too small, they are very comfortable; even the sod-houses are sometimes cozy. They are entirely for the time. They shelter their owners until they can get lumber and labor for something bigger and bet-

ter. For me, hovel always rhymes with grovel; I think of people in poverty and dirt, very, very poor!’

Now it was the guest who was roused, controversialist that she was, true to her kind.

‘Oh! na, na, na! a hovel is, if you will, a sma’ house. It may be built of stone, Madame, roofed with tile or slate; and whether the dwelling is clean and cozy, depends on the folk that live in it! Some hovels are built for the kine; and some people live almost as if they were no better. Oh yes! The pity of it!

‘But honest people live often in small houses. When Robert and I began in Belfast, we had a sma’ house, and his father came to see us. He said, “Why did you buy such a hovel?” But it had four rooms; big enough for two!

“Give me more to put in it, and I’ll buy a bigger house”, said Robert.

‘A bright man is Robert, Ma’am; you’ll like him, I’m sure you’ll like him. He likes a horse and is always reading about them. He reads poetry and says, “I’m a little dearer than his horse”; that he would give a “kingdom for a horse”. He does na like John Milton’s story of creation, because Milton says nothing about a horse, but makes a lion get up like one, “pawing to get free his hinder parts” and all such nonsense.

‘Robert says Milton lived in a hovel; that when Charles came back to the throne of his “sainted” father, the poet had to run for it! But the Quaker lads hunted him up, went to him in the dining room of his hovel with their Latin, and in the next room, when it pleased him, he could touch the viol and the pipe-organ — in a hovel!

‘He talks like that all the time, Robert; he cares little, though, for the Church.

‘Oh yes; compared with the homes of the lairds and the rich, small houses are hovels. Things in this world, Madame, go oft by contraries; the noblest folk live sometimes in the smallest homes. The houses on the hillside yonder are, as you say, too small for the fine folk that live in them.

‘Things in this world go oft by contraries; the finest man that ever walked the earth had, they say, no house at a’, not even a hovel or a fox-earth!’

Mrs. Lyon was silent; absolutely astounded was she; but she had something very different in her mind and presently, without further ado, started off, leading the stranger to the left, along a dim pathway, whence might be seen a wild-plum, crab-apple thicket, now blooming, far along the stream.

XII

THE PATH OF WONDER

LONG before ever they reached even the margin of the wilderness toward which she moved, the stranger had become so excited by what she could already see, that hovel and palace — and who knows but Robert even — were entirely out of mind.

In the evening light of yesterday with all its problems strange, moving on the open highway across the bridge, attended by swarms of 'whirring birds', she had little noted the trees that flanked the stream and were indeed, as now, mirrored in the waters. But this morning, the warmth and light of summer sun seemed to summon not only every tree and bush and flower, and bee, and bird to its supreme performance, but no doubt stirred even each and every individual cell to maximum explosion. Every petal brightened, every spendthrift stamen rose, bursting, casting vital dust on stigma, yea, strange largess on leaf and stem, nor less upon the ascending tides of air; every gland distilling nectar, breathing odors as if to fill a world expectant, not in overflowing floods indeed, rudely, crudely overpowering, as when vibrant horn or beaten parchment assails the ear with noisy thunder; not so at all, but in faint, succeeding, gentle waves of charm, exquisite as the softened tones of string or pipe, touched with skill in twilight to soothe and comfort souls perturbed!

Thus easily on this quiet summer morning did Nature spread her lavish wealth, open her perfumed gardens, wild, untilled, untouched of man — flowers of plum and

crab and thorn, in cloud-like masses, for rods and miles — to greet all sympathetic spirits of the prairie or the sky; perchance to reach the hearts of men! What a spectacle! the billowy drift of bloom, now snowy white, now touched with every softest tint of cherry-red, a pearly splendor, ethereal odors wafted far!

A picture of enchantment; and two enchanted women stopped and gazed in silent admiration — for a moment — then the stranger: 'What shall I do? What shall I *do*? I feel like clapping my hands, like jumping, like screaming, flying! Everything is so impossible; I don't know what to *do*!'

'Do nothing', said her friend, 'do nothing; can't you just be glad! You keep quiet; there'll be noise enough in a few minutes; we have just started; we must go on. All that you see is just the background for something else. This is a show; we have not seen the actors; we must try to get nearer.'

Approach at first did but emphasize the beauty of the scene; the trees enlarged, took individual form, the colors brightened; but soon a strange rhythmic chatter reached the ear, was it the sound of rippling, tinkling water from many hidden, rocky streams? Quick movement came to view; not flowers now, but a world of flashing wings, as if all the tiny flying things that Nature ever made had taken full possession of that grove. They had! All the red-starts, vireos, wrens, thistle-birds, kinglets, warblers — lords and tenantry — catchers of flies, gray and yellow and orange and green, scarlet and black, all the minor dignitaries of the shining empire of the air; diving and dipping, falling and flitting, now on paths unseen, quick through the snowy billows of bloom, nor less threading the tangled branches of the thorn,

where crafty cat, marauding owl, shall never find a way; up and down, and in and out, over and under, above and about, in movement endlessly varied, till the *watchers* were wearied! and then —

Then there came up high-pitched, staccato, whistling, trilling, piping, shrill but tuneful notes from thousand vibrant, tiny throats to make harmonious music, each little artist contributing his own compelling chord to one wide chorus of immemorial song!

Again the women stood; awed perhaps; like guests unbidden, they could not choose but hear. But Nature even here had not yet done her utmost. Just as the guide began to urge her guest to further exploration, a pair of hummers all unexpected, dashed like bullets past their noses!

‘Domine! Domine! what was that?’, in whispered exclamation.

‘Hist! Hist!’ — the brief reply.

Like bullets the little whirring creatures sped as if for instant disappearance. But no; on a dry twig, not a dozen feet away, perched one of those jeweled mid-gets of the feathered world — the folded wings, the body all a-shine with glittering-green, brilliant eyes, the far-extended bill, the throat, glowing in the bright sunshine, turned now this way and now that, a burning opal, a flaming ruby, falling fire, set in bed of gold and green!

‘Oh, yes! the ruby-throat!’ said the hostess, ‘almost the least of birds. But you must see them later on, when in *air* they *rest*, as if by tip of bill they *hang*; each before some open flower, a hollyhock, a rose, the stiff little wings whirring, humming like a spinning top, and like it lost in mist of motion!’

Just as she spoke the tiny object moved, instantane-

ously was gone, fortunately only to stop a moment later to taste the center of the reddest, sweetest, apple blossom in the field entire; and there it hung — an instant! — then, darted out of sight!

‘Domine, Domine!’ was all the guest could say, actually pale in excitement and surprise.

What the meaning of that exclamation, her hostess did not guess; but she recalled that her Dutch consort sometimes used that word when speaking of the parson! It must be, therefore, some religious term; of high significance, no doubt, in a land where even hovels have two stories, and can on occasion hold at once a dining room, an organ, and a poet!

‘Time passes; more yet! more yet!’, she cried, ‘we surely must go; to come perhaps another day.’

Not without difficulty they retraced their steps, reaching at length the highway and the uplifted bridge. Standing by its rail they could now look out over more wild orchards, the lower trees, the branches that pushed athwart the stream; but for these things Mrs. Lyon seemed now careful not at all. Instead, at the bridge’s farther side she pointed to a knot-hole, high on the side of a dead cottonwood tree — and there, there, *sat* upon her nest, a *duck!* — *a nesting duck in a hollow tree!*

Did lover of birds ever before behold the like of that?

The air, of course, is for the birds highway and domain *accoutumé*; but the forest is likewise their continuing city; every tree a port of call, if not of entry; but not for heavy, lazy ducks, whose wings are oars for depths above as are its feet for shallow pools below. A duck upon a tree is a sailor rolling about the corridors of Athos mountain!

About the bridge, the scene was full of birds, each

speeding on errand of its own — whirling, darting, hovering, resting, netting the upper air with shining sails, evidently in no whit disturbed by the presence of human watchers — swallows, thrushes, blackbirds, creepers, waders, swimmers, fishers, tilters, the very paradise of birds; but on a cottonwood tree, a nesting *duck* sat *still*, beside a robin!*

Nor was this all; within ten yards of the bridge-rail on which they leaned, his web-feet awkwardly clasping a naked branch of the same old tree in which the duck was nesting, rested her mate, *attendant*! not only the most beautiful duck that ever flew, but surely one of the most brilliantly beautiful objects that Nature ever brought to view in all this wondrous world!

The sunlight, filtered through a fruiting, but not yet enfoliated elm hard by, came drifting down in glistening shafts, as if it were intended not to dazzle the beholder, but rather to illuminate the jewelled brilliancy of one special object — that one waiting bird; for, from flowing amethystine crest to the very tip of the last fringing caudal feather, from scarlet beak to steely wing, everything about the upper surface of that creature was spread with soft metallic sheen, so that as the sunlight came and went, the lovely plumage not only displayed all shades of richest coloration, green and purple, and violet and indigo and orange, with added chestnut, black and white, but yielded up each individual tint glorified by the peculiar splendor of polished metal, silver and steel and bronze and gold, such as no description may attempt, no painter's gifted brush reveal!

Beneath the bird was spotless white, white as the

* Compare Audubon. See also Coues's *Birds of the Northwest*, p. 572. See *Dendrocygna*, too, pp. 558, 559.

snow! In our old murky world, how could he keep so clean? And then his sides behind his barred metallic wings, these were orange, buff marked with pencillings of black, from feather to feather ran the wavy lines! so delicate, so exact, so precisely right — only a Don or Steen might venture to tell of these, to say nothing of imitation or portrayal!

Our friends again stood silent, entranced at once by the peculiar habit, as well as by the rich splendors of the individual bird — only an item in the strange beauty of the scene entire — here was the second splendid spectacle of Nature undisturbed!

Nor savage hound nor heedless man had yet intruded or moved to interrupt the peaceful weaving of life's glorious vesture. Listen, only listen! you may in imagination hear and see this latest stroke of the flitting shuttle, speeding from endless centuries, speeding this hour for just two, lone, but happy, intelligent, perceiving spirits brought thus by merest chance together at the world's end to face what God in life could do!

Little did these honest souls — so different, yet so natural in their sympathetic joy — little did they forecast how vain such pleasures are, because to such degree are utterly evanescent the fairest works of God! They did not know the voice of the *Erdgeist*, weaver of the *living* garment, when, discouraged, he left this modern world; left man to himself, all incapable of sympathy or of appreciation of that which eternities have brought to being, but which he so thoroughly fails to understand, though the great loom of time roar always at his stupid ears!*

* Needless to say such scenes appear in Iowa no more, perhaps; certainly as concerns the same species, nowhere now on earth!

Ich bin's, bin *Faust*, bin deines Gleichen!
Der du die weite Welt umschweifst,
Geschäftiger Geist, wie nah fühl' ich mich dir!
Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst
NICHT MIR!

Even Mrs. Lyon was surprised at what she saw. She had, she thought, seen it all before, but never as to-day. She said as much as she turned to return to the house, first pointing out the continuing path that led beyond the stream, around a dark bulrush marsh, and thence across a meadow to the hillside in the distance, visible and plain.

'Try that', she said, 'I'm sure you will enjoy it, and will have something to tell when you get back; go no farther than the trail-end for fear you may get lost!'

'Oh madame, if it is so fine for you who have seen it often, what think ye it maun be for me, who have ne'er seen aught but stone-houses, and streets, and gardens with planted parks; with nae music save that of roaring machines and whistling-blasts. In Belfast the Sabbath day is all abused by noise of jangling church-bells, as if by such clangor men might be summoned, when each in Nature's stillness should hear and be content. Oh, Madame! you canna dream how fair, how grand it all becomes.

'It is in the beauty of these lesser things, less than we are, that we really find some comfort; is it not? All these wonderful things do simply *grow*. Even the silent plants are wonderful enough to bless. "They toil not, neither do they spin!" If Robert could only see this! Oh, I am so glad!'

Mrs. Lyon, cosmopolitan as she was, was not accustomed to anything at all like this; she looked up to see folded hands! She began to wonder what manner of

woman the fortune of the hour had brought to her. Of quiet poise she seemed, perfectly well-bred, competent to appreciate and aid in all the problems and labors of a menage; and yet with mind open in such surprising fashion to the real charm and beauty of the world; to all that the simple prairie could display; this was a revelation for which the mistress of the prairie, for such she was, was entirely unprepared.

‘The beauty of the world’, she said, ‘is clean, is pure, I think, absolutely unmoral; made to be admired, and the enjoyment of it seems to me the most natural, as it is the most exquisite delight that open minds can know. Iowa has its hardships; but I would not have missed it for the world! Like you, I am glad; I am glad for you and with you.

‘But do not attempt too much. Remember we have new experiences for this afternoon; good-bye!’

The stranger stood a moment silent, watched her hostess as toward the house she climbed the slope alone. Almost inclined to follow now was she, when suddenly a waving hand roused and reminded her. She turned and forward sped along.

Long ere she reached the end of her path appointed, she had seen many curious, beautiful things. For her benefit a mother prairie-hen this morning led forth her flock and the fluffy brood went rolling a stream of little spheres across the path, just a little distance in advance. The young were in evidence for a moment only, as the hen in short tumbling flight gave forth her warning cry. All fuzzy and furred, brown and marked with white were they, indistinctly barred, presently vanishing utterly, as if sunken into the soil; nor could our observer, after long and careful search in the place of first ap-

pearance find of a single one of them, trace or sign; such the ways of these cunning birdlings; nor did she see more, though clucking mothers oft appeared within a few yards of the trodden path.

To her delight also appeared a pair of woodchucks, busied industriously in the checkered sunlight beneath an ancient oak, just where woodland and prairie meet. At her approach they sat erect; each with a pair of stubby little hands, encased in close knit gloves of silken blackness, above a tawny throbbing breast now crossed demurely; then, obeisance duly made, quickly they turned and with a curious rolling undulatory movement tumbled away to cover, down the steep, wooded slope.

She stood upon an unmarked, unbroken prairie, everywhere the full glory of summer sunshine; yet was earth's surface not without a certain checkered softened splendor. There were shiny waters here and there, else all was green; but the green was in varying shades, low, wet lands were held by sedge and rush; these were livid, nearly black, absorbing even the brilliancy of day. The higher grounds were covered with purer grasses, these of a shimmering, paler tint, impossible to describe, yellow perhaps predominant, but everywhere suggestive of the newness and the freshness of a recreated world! Just before her, as she moved, lay wild meadows tinged with blossoming, budding, half-opened flowers. Here and there, perhaps a 'prairie captain' lifted his modest cluster of stars, but the time for widest inflorescence was perhaps not yet.

But the meadow was full of music! Such music! She never had heard the like, so clear, so ringing, and so abundant. It seemed to her that the very earth must be full of song; little black-stoled musicians rising every-

where, singing as they rose; the sharp melodies of tinkling bars voiced now by floating birds.

'Bobolinks', said Mrs. Lyon, when she heard the story some hours later, 'if the sky be clear to-night, listen from your window, and then, if fortune favor, you will hear that song again, for these birds move by night, they singing flit, and flying sing.'

And sure enough, that very night, long after other experiences had driven from mind the visions of the morning, our guest was indeed startled to hear at her open window the same ringing, clinking, metallic song, — Nature's carillons again of weird but simple melody, wafted from regions loftier perhaps than all the arrowy steeples of sleepy Belgian towns!

But the traveler saw something stranger still, before she reached the end of that path of wonder in the brightness of that morning. The primitive prairie was marked not infrequently by scattered trees, sometimes in groups; anon, a single specimen, a cottonwood more often, stood like a lone sentinel, not only far from any wooded region, but miles even from any other tree. 'Lone trees' were often notable, landmarks, historic even. Furthermore, such trees were constant mark for lightning; seamed and scarred were they; at length leafless, barkless, dead and whitening in the summer sun.

Such a tree appeared now a little to one side of our traveler's way; but for some reason strangely colored, full of life and noise. 'Evidently a flock of birds', she said, as she turned from the beaten path to see them at close range, ere they should, frightened, disappear. She moved cautiously, but the birds were undisturbed; busied in their own concerns, unending clatter; they heeded her not at all, and she stood presently in perfect

astonishment in the presence of a flock of *parrots*! Had they called out her name, she had hardly been more surprised; form, color, movement, unmistakable; she could scarce believe her senses; a flock of tropic birds in the middle of the continent, '*Ubinam gentium!*' Where in the world am I?

But here they were, a hundred of them, even more; large and fine, with hooked beak and truncate jaw, staring eyes and raucous voice; here they were, half-witted, dull, and stupid, nor more nor less than those, their parti-colored kin, that swarm the jungles of Columbia or Ceylon, sold to men — *civilized*, dare we say? — to scream the necessities of simple fare, or utter forth profanity, Dutch, or now Castilian; here they were, in all the gaudy color tones that make the forests of the tropics flare — blue and yellow, green and orange and red, gorgeous in the glorious light; here they were, swinging by beak, climbing by claw, but calling, screaming all the while, the morons, idiots of the avian world. Only the general assembly of all the blackbirds of the marshes, on a frosty morning in October might suggest the volume of their noise discordant; yet heedless almost entirely unresponding!

Their visitor walked at leisure, once and again, round and round the tree; she even tossed among them broken sticks, and saw individuals take to brief, circumambient flight — the great uproarious crowd, indifferent, insensate, unperturbed; yet the most gorgeous, tawdry living picture on all the panorama of the western plains.

When the lady returned to the path, she found it less distinct and began to realize that the end of her morning walk was not far. Nevertheless for some distance she kept boldly on, the plain gently descending making

her progress easy. But the path grew more and more obscure and presently ceased altogether, or at best, became dissipated in numerous, faint, radiating trails, spreading to all the wide land that stretched before her; she had reached the appointed end!

She stopped, of course, and turning looked about. Far as she could see, was not now a 'living thing', much less the sign of human habitation; not one thing could her eye discern that ever she had seen before! Once again she was alone, and for a moment she was filled with fear; she sought the path, sat down beside it, and in her alarm, put her hand upon it, almost sought to grasp it lest by chance it should slip away and so elude her; then she grew more confident, she stood erect and traced to the horizon's edge the sunny landscape as it lay before her. Everything was absolutely silent. Even the bobolink on the distant meadows had ceased to ring his silvery bells; the crested hill shut off the noisy parrot swarm. On all the plain lay that indefinable, silken, shimmering beauty seen only when Nature spreads her art afresh, her brush dipped in the new returning sunlight of a northern spring!

To her left a belt of greening forest marked a river tortuous, to her right a similar stretch of woodland set out the valley of the creek she had been following. At the very limit of vision, she imagined she could see the two woodlands come together and she fancied that there creek and river joined. Then she looked back again at the slender path; she rejoiced now that it was indistinct; she knew now that in one spot at least, she had reached at last the very limit of the occupancy of this earth by the tide of civilized men, and she rejoiced! The planet was wholly beneath her feet! All its own

mighty history, all the joys and sorrows of men, the travail of creation, were beneath her or behind her — back along one mighty path of wonder, never dreamed of till now — and she was superior to it all! The whole world was hers and she rejoiced in it; it was at last so fair! But all at once the very silence of Nature shocked her; her situation, her own past, her own little present waiting for to-morrow, its content impossible to guess? It was too much; she was suddenly overwhelmed with fear. She would have screamed aloud, but none was there to hear. The path before so plain, now lost distinctness. Panic-stricken, she rushed to find it; it had slipped from sight! Her shadow, which in deference due, had all the morning followed out of sight, now lay at her hand, so short that it pointed not at all, she thought! How vast at once the world; how absolutely void! Lost!

Ready to faint, irresolute she stood, when suddenly the piercing staccato of Mr. Lafferty's featherless bird thrilled her very soul! She turned, she fled, she knew not whither! From such exalted triumph, to such despair! 'Oh, the uncertain glory of an April day!'

Long time, she thought, she fled, until she could go no more; then settled to the ground with closing eyes. When 'a few minutes later', as she used to say, she stumbled to her feet, opened her eyes and looked about, there, plain before her lay the shining valley, the up-lifted bridge, the white-painted house immediately beyond, and, better than all, this side the bridge, she saw a woman climbing up the hillside where she rested!

What followed need not be described. Mrs. Lyon instantly surmised the situation, forestalled all explanations, by remarking: 'Just in time for dinner! later al-

ways, you know, on Sunday; a little later to-day, since I half-expected Mr. Lyon and your husband; plenty of time this evening to talk of what you have seen; this afternoon I'll show something entirely different; we will see the people of the prairie!'

XIII

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

IN the development of the prairie commonwealth, the Sunday school was a factor, unnoted perchance, but withal decidedly potential. The Christian religion, whatever its mysteries, however divine in origin, has always been on its human side a matter largely social. Men and women love to find a common interest, an excuse for the assembling of themselves together. On the prairie such excuses were not too many, especially on Sunday; and in the absence of a church, the humble, less formal, absolutely democratic institution of Robert Raikes, all apart from any religious significance, filled acceptably and beautifully a real need.

For years the log schoolhouse was the place of meeting, and on a pleasant day in summer, the only reason why the whole community did not attend Sunday school was that the building could not contain the people. In summer, of course, adults save those concerned in teaching, might seek the shadows of the pair of large cottonwood trees already known to readers of this history. Benches early found place for this extra-limital part of the congregation; although for many the bare ground or prairie turf seemed a place more convenient for quiet conversation.

For many of the older people such quiet visiting was the principal attraction. Old Mr. Snyder liked to talk to Peter Mitchell, when that gentleman's hearing was at its best; and Gottlieb Landsman had less concern for the various disputations that always distinguished the

class for men; neither had Pigeon Moss and Daniel Purkypile before they went to Kansas; but — that is another matter.

But even outside the building there was always more or less restraint; at time of singing, and especially during prayer, when silence fell; from a distance you might hear perhaps the murmur of petition, but chiefly the whispering of the wind on the prairie grasses, or if you listened well perchance 'the sound of a going in the tops' of the cottonwood trees, music to the attentive spirit!

Mrs. Lyon and her guest were just on the point of leaving the house on that memorable Sunday afternoon, when who should appear at the door but Mr. Landsman to say that, the day being fine, he and his family were all en route to Sunday school; and, knowing Mr. Lyon's absence, they were calling to offer to Mrs. Lyon and her guest such escort as they might. This was no doubt the obverse of Mr. Landsman's intent; it was thought that a natural curiosity to see the guest of the community may have contributed at least to the extent of overcoming the gentleman's innate diffidence in entering upon such an errand. But in justice it should be said that his way to the schoolhouse led directly past Mr. Lyon's home, so that in this case at least the quality of mercy was not strained.

Mrs. Lyon, of course, accepted the courtesy, introduced the guest, and presently joined the Landsman party waiting at the gate below.

Here, however, were strangers to Mrs. Lyon even, Mrs. Landsman's father, Samedi by name, and her sister, Bettina — Betty in short — were this day of the party; had recently come from Illinois to make home with Gottlieb until other could be found. Mr. Samedi

proved to be an intelligent German who had fled the Rhine Valley for his own good, and had so far found it as to be now a thorough-going American; rather too much so for our guest, although that lady kept discreetly silent.

To save steps, the party soon left the beaten road and began to cross the open prairie across the hill, not without some hesitation, for Gottlieb suggested snakes; but the way being so much nearer, the courage of the ladies sufficed. Mr. Samedi fortunately went before. He carried in hand a small sharp-pointed cane. As they walked on in single file they heard now and then a prairie hen clucking her notes of warning, or sometimes one rose suddenly at their feet; but our guest, by this time familiar with the performance, was delighted rather than surprised; the summer air moved softly and she was glad.

In presence of strangers our country folk were little inclined to talk; they were wont to observe; and sometimes talked, later on! Accordingly for a time the party moved in silence. Once or twice Mr. Samedi stopped suddenly and more than once our guest was fancying she heard 'featherless birds' and had just said so to Mrs. Lyon, when suddenly with the point of his cane, Mr. Samedi lifted and held a moment in air a real serpent, the shrill rattle sounding as he cast it far, though the head was pierced:—

'A rattler!' exclaimed Mrs. Lyon.

'A viper!' said her guest, greatly excited; 'a Scotch viper! Who thought to see one here!' Mike's euphemism dawned, and she shuddered.

'In mid-summer, yes', said Mr. Samedi. 'They always wake from winter sleep about the time the prairie hen

brings off her brood; and live, I verily believe, upon the eggs and young. When the birds of the prairie disappear the grey rattlesnakes leave absolutely, and never return. There are no snakes in Ireland I have heard tell, thanks to St. Patrick.'

'Indeed there are no snakes in Ireland', was the reply, 'and for that matter, no rattlers in Europe that e'er I heard of. Blessed be the memory of Patrick! Surely he never walked these plains leaving a skirling thing like that to fright guid folk! But Father Mathew says the snake St. Patrick was after is still the plague of both Scotland and Ireland, very venomous and poisonous as of old; it still "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder!"'

This was intelligible to all but Bettina; who, when her father interpreted, made due acknowledgment with a smile.

But presently the party reached the place of assembly, and conversation fell silent. The day was so fine, the gentle, idly floating clouds were so pearl-like, the air so pure, that everybody seemed inclined to stay outdoors unless official duty called him elsewhere.

The scene that greeted the eye was extremely natural, yet not without a certain quiet dignity which instantly commanded all respect. Small groups of young men, some without coats, indeed, stood quietly about, demure looking maidens, in modest apparel, stood chatting near their mothers and friends, seated nearly all on bench or sod, watching the barefoot smaller children playing about where the trembling poplar leaves cast their curious checkered shadows. One could hear the hum of children's voices through the open door and windows of the schoolhouse; certain small boys not yet controlled

were disposed, as on week days, to play hide-and-seek around the corners. Otherwise all was perfectly quiet as Mrs. Lyon came up to present her guest.

This simple ceremony ended, on the little company of women again forthwith, as is the custom, solemn stillness came. Mrs. Lyon knew her neighbors and was too wise by far to interrupt unnecessarily such formal solemnity; but her guest was so happy and so delighted with all that she saw, that she made haste to remark her pleasure in the landscape and the brightness and beauty all about.

'You come from "back east" somewhere I suppose', said Mrs. Dennis. The phrase 'back east' our friend did not immediately comprehend; but she stopped not in an effort to reply.

'I came from County Antrim; in its own way very pleasant and very fair, but not like this at all.'

'I suppose there is no finer country in the world than Iowa', said Mrs. Stillmore, with the approval, but somewhat to the surprise of her neighbors. Mrs. Stillmore's husband had been caught in a snowstorm three years before on the open prairie, and perished; his body un-found for months. Mrs. Stillmore was wont to speak of the incident as a 'distressful providence'.

'You be sure it's a fine country', said the next speaker. 'Pap says it's finer than Indiana, and that's saying a good deal, for Pap's a born Hoosier. You're stopping, I hear, up at the Lyons's. We think that is the very finest house we have. I reckon you've seen the guest room and the horses?'

Our guest made only a partial answer, partly because she chose to conceal her surprise, partly because she did not care to proceed too far in her first converse with

strangers. She simply said: 'Oh yes, I like the house very much; I have seen stables but no horses.'

Behind the wooden schoolhouse and a little removed, had our friends chosen to look at all in that direction, they had doubtless noted a plain farm wagon standing, a pair of sad-eyed oxen still bearing the yoke grazing quietly not far away. The owner of this bit of idyllic property was, to be sure, Squire Marks, none but he, whose family (rightly) always thought the distance too great for walking. Wife and children were in the house, but the Squire stood leaning by the wagon; Davie had found him out, and as usual, disputation was in full tide and swing, when Mr. Lafferty suddenly appeared to present, as if a new-found friend, Mr. Samedi. The Squire gave cordial greeting to the newcomer, while Davie, of course, began to question his fellow-countryman,

'How do you like our new Irishwoman, Mike; did you talk to her?'

'Irish is it ye're talkin'?' said the indignant Mike. 'She's not *Irish*; tare-and-ages; she can't talk English at all, at all! No sir! She's Scotch, she talks Scotch; I couldn't understand the half of what she did say; and she's that crazy about thim birds cryin' and whaupin' above the creek there; I thought she was to spind the night wid thim on the bridge. She's as bad as Mrs. Lyon, who is the very best woman on the prairie, barrin' Katie, and I knows it; yes sor; yes sor; I knows it!'

Just here a sharp but musical ringing of a high-toned bell sounded out a summons clear. Those in front of the schoolhouse saw standing in the door an erect, bright-eyed girl ringing a small old-fashioned dinner bell, ringing with the vim and precision that marked her at once

the conscientious schoolmistress that she was, bearing the globe of Atlas on her shoulders, no doubt; none the less felt, because forsooth unnoticed by the unthinking, careless world. Miss Matilda Magagan, the teacher on week-days, managed the Sunday school on Sunday, with promptness and efficiency just the same, although the superintendent was really Morton Leslie, Davie's distinguished brother-in-law.

At this time the interior of the log structure remained much as already described. Mr. Snyder had contributed a handsome walnut table to serve for the teacher's desk, and had arranged the writing boards along the wall to hang when not in use, thus contributing very materially to the seating capacity of the room. Narrow oak benches, without backs, made every inch of the floor available.

At the call of the bell, all the younger people and women not concerned with little children entered at once; older people generally congregated near the open windows, or remained standing about the door. Mr. Snyder's masterpiece stood just before the great open-throated fireplace, and Mrs. Lyon and her guest had been given seats near the table; was not such our courtesy with strangers!

When the little company finally grew quiet our guest was confronted by rows of bright-eyed children plainly clad but generally clean; very brown for the most part; some so very dark that our guest must have had in mind an earlier population when she remarked: 'The Indians are *usually* quite dark-colored, are they not?' But there were no red men before her!

As the people came in, our teacher remained (from habit) standing at the table, and only when all were seated did she give place to the superintendent, a tall

blue-eyed, fair-haired man just in the glow of early manhood's vigor, smooth-faced but sun-burned, bronzy like the rest. For some minutes he had been occupied in tuning a violin, much to the surprise of our visitor. When at length the strings of the instrument in their several vibrations seemed to show each for the other a reasonable degree of respect harmonious, the master rose and played a simple melody. As he concluded he lifted his bow and said softly — 'Now!' Whereupon the delighted children and their elders sang!

If surprised at the violin, much more was our guest astonished at the song. It proceeded from memory! Not a songbook in the room. Such aids to dumb forgetfulness, whatever the situation elsewhere, had not as yet found place upon the prairies.

As the singing ended, the musician remained standing and the school rose about him for the opening prayer. Holding yet his instrument in his hand the youthful superintendent bowed his head and prayed. Very simple it was, and softly spoken, but had it been written even by Father Blew its words had never been more appropriate, more fitting. But written it never was, nor shall pencil of mine profanely strive to transcribe here the solemn communings of that impressive hour. Suffice to say that largely in the measured phraseology of the 'book of books', praise, thanksgiving, petition, the orison flowed along, a prayer of gladness, rejoicing in opportunity, in life's abounding, in health, in hope, in love; the river of God is full of water, the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys are covered with corn, they shout for joy, they also sing; a prayer of thanksgiving; the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage; a prayer for wisdom;

the wisdom that is from above; first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits; a prayer for all men, for the fruit of justice, sown in peace of them that make peace, a prayer for peace! For peace! At that very moment when all nature about us stretched away so beautiful, so bright, did not fear lie in every heart, some strange foreboding that might not be expressed or stilled, as if mutterings of approaching storm should sound below the horizon's distant rim; was not Kansas at this very moment symbolized in black! Nay, were not some of the men of the prairie already in the valley of the Kaw!

And so the prayer went on to Him who 'maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire,' closing with the petition — the strong manly language of the sixty-seventh Psalm. Wonderful!

The directness and evident sincerity of the petition touched the heart of our visitor, she knew not why; she could not understand as yet the reason for such pleadings, but she felt and remembered long. That all elder people knew, she did not fail to note; some even remained standing as the petition ended; nor did those at door and windows move at all until the tones of the violin again recalled the duties of the hour and sounded forth the notes of another old-time song — *America* — the air their leader played, and at the magic 'now' the voices of the little company rose in unison prompt as the readiness of choirs expert. Everybody sang; those outside the house as those within. Even Davie, who usually sang the 'Psalms of David' only, could not withhold, but with others at the window to the west lead in uplifting strains the second stanza, a chorus strong antiphonal:

My native country, thee, —

Perhaps this line caught everybody; possibly scenes of his own homeland rose fair on the vision of each patriot as he sang; at any rate Gottlieb and Mr. Samedi, Mr. Lafferty, and 'Welsh' Martin sang with equal enthusiasm —

Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love; —

Our guest, meanwhile, as she told afterwards, was thunderstruck to hear England's national anthem sung the first thing on the prairie and was just about to join in *God Save the Queen* when she discovered that Mrs. Lyon was singing something else. Even so; just at the last, the very concluding line startled not a little her patriotic heart.

By this time the tension occasioned by the remarkable opening prayer had disappeared completely, and Miss Magagan went on to distribute the classes as usual. Miss Blew who had fortunately just arrived would meet all the adult women and girls at the trees; these were studying the *Acts*; in Father Blew's absence, Squire Marks would lead the men's class, north of the house; the superintendent would have his usual class for the young men, about the door; while she herself and Hester Simpson would keep the children near the desk — and — behold the Sunday school!

'Lessons? There are none! These demure looking children before you, madam, come not for lessons here on Sunday, said Miss Magagan. On week-days, almost as wild as the birds and beasts they chase, they make life for me a burden. At odd times at home they commit to memory scripture texts and stanzas of well-known

songs, and are here on Sunday to show what they have done, or failed to do; you shall see. I begin with the younger; the older ones would occupy the entire time did we begin with one of them.'

Upon this the teacher called Arthur Marks, 'barefoot boy with cheeks of tan', who responded with the last stanza of that wonderful song which 'babbles of green fields; —

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me, —

'Very good, Arthur, now you have recited every verse. Next Sunday you may recite all at once; and then, we shall sing what you recite.'

Johnnie Hartrock came next: 'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John'. So far had this lad come on with the most marvelous book that human pen has written; Johnnie, at least, knew the author's name! On the prairie the beloved disciple was a favorite.

'Neither boy can read', said the teacher.

'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings', said her guest. And so those children went forward verse and text, text and verse. Did not one recite Isaiah 55 entire, and another began the fourteenth of John having on previous days repeated all that went before. To secure attention and to give to each equal opportunity, did the reciter, hesitate or err, another took his place, *at the same point*, if possible; if not, with something else. Our hero on this occasion had reached as it chanced verse eighteen of the matchless chapter when his youthful memory faltered; another lifted a ready hand and so went on 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you', and so to the chapter's end. The kindly ladies smiled.

Meantime the little girls under Miss Hetty's management were engaged in precisely the same way, the feats of memory sometimes surprising. To many of those children, now in old age, those memories live, and bring forth not leaves alone, perennial green, but flowers and fruit!

The older young folk were also busy in that palace of logs, reading selected scriptures, and discussing with their teachers problems of their own. The religion of the Bible and the politics of his country were the two themes that for the pioneer always secured most prompt attention. Of these he never wearied; in those dull days such topics were even thought important!

The superintendent knew his neighbors, and, without surprise, found himself confronted, Sunday after Sunday, by young men, in all stages of adolescent progress; some diffident, some in the high conceit of youth, some conscious of rising intellectual power, some, their wings already beating the bars of human limitation. On the wide plain, on civilization's outer fringe, think not the great questions of their fathers were not still their own, insidious, insistent, persistent, perplexing still.

The apologist of the prairie, however brave, might not as teacher essay to justify the ways of God to men and not expect to meet and meet again all the old queries that taken together make up humanity's pathetic cry; the same that echoed long ago when, as if to hear, Arc-turus and his sons looked down upon the dust-heap of the man of Uz: 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!'

Mr. Leslie knew this and had learned at least one way to meet such querying. He told of one who, even while yet in youth, toiled with his hands, knew the habitations

of the poor, traversed in hunger the fields of ripening grain, sat alone by the fountains and wells to rest, and yet, somehow gave answers that have strangely met for 2000 years the cry of every noblest soul. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' Listen! hear the almost inconceivable beatitude that rests with 'the pure in heart!' Or does that vision ineffable seem too far, too remote its rising, the same gentle voice lends the assurance of knowledge confident to 'any man' who 'will do his will'. In briefest words the youthful teacher of Galilee answered the young man of the prairie; across the centuries, do not *young* men still *meet*? — '*be and see; do and know!*'

While the young people in the house were thus employed, under the cottonwood trees that day, the elder women under the skilful pilotage of Miss Blew were sailing the Mediterranean Sea in wooden ship, forlorn, tied up with ropes, helpless, at the mercy of a northeast wind, when in a course of many days nor sun nor star appeared; a fearful journey for any time or place, much more for a sunny prairie afternoon. However, as it happened both Mrs. Landsman and her sister had had similar journey — a sailing vessel on the Atlantic, driven by a furious storm, and their story, brought out by the careful questioning of Miss Blew, so fascinated the neighbors, that even Mrs. Ramsgate for once forgot about horses and with the rest voted to learn more about ships the next Sunday.

The experience of the men under direction of the Squire was also not lacking in interest or excitement. For them the 'Ship of State' went sailing on stormy seas in almost starless night! About the Squire's wagon a group had formed and as the spectacled magistrate

approached, Tennessee was just recounting what he had heard in Burlington, the latest news from Kansas: were not armed Missourians again invading, and Lawrence once more threatened with sack and pillage! The little company went forthwith into 'committee of the whole on the state of the Union', and for the Squire the speaker's mace must have been under the wagon, for in the general clamor he found no opportunity to say one single word. Eli Thayer and border ruffians, Stephen A. Douglas and popular sovereignty, came in for general discussion, not always accurate as to fact, but unmistakable as to tone and ultimate intention. 'I think Douglas ought to be hung', said Mr. Ramsgate, 'the country was quiet, and while the fugitive slave law is detestable, a bargain is a bargain and ought not to be disturbed.'

'I know Douglas', said Mr. Samedi, 'he has ambition, to be sure, but I think the Kansas-Nebraska Bill really more favorable to freedom than the old Missouri Compromise. By the legislation of 1820 and 1850 Kansas would be a slave State; now she may come in free. Eli Thayer saw this and his effort from New England makes civil war.'

'I won't stand for that', said Mr. Dennis, 'I am glad the repeal went through, because compromise is wrong in my dictionary, always wrong. But Eli Thayer or anybody else has now a perfect right to take his family to Kansas and make his home there. A man from South Carolina can do the same thing; can even take his slaves there, if he wants to, and hold them for the present. But all this has nothing to do with the particular case. The law is on the books as it is and we can't change it. But are we going to sit quiet here, trading horses, plowing fields, going to Sunday school day after day, while

mobs are murdering women and children, the very best people in the world, burning their houses, destroying their farms, killing the men who in good faith are obedient to law, trying to occupy a country to which the nation invites them? Are we going to tolerate *this*? I for one say *no*!

‘Why, if a band of Indians got loose on the plains and began to behave as those Missouri bandits are doing now in Kansas, within twenty-four hours the roads would be black with men riding to sweep every Indian off the face of the earth! Shall we allow men of any color, from any State, to abuse one single white woman? Not so long as there flows in my veins one single drop of old Kentucky blood, or burns in my heart one spark of old Kentucky fire! It is not war: it is self-defense!’

‘That’s it! That’s it! I’m wid ye’, exclaimed Mr. Lafferty, ‘indade I am. No murtherin’ of women or childer, no sir! no sir! None of that at all, at all! A man when he’s drunk used sometimes to abuse his wife in the ould country, but if he abused another man’s wife he was sure to be hung for it, yes sir, yes sir.’

Mike was very much in earnest and no one smiled; nevertheless what he said was somewhat distracting and to that extent helpful, because the excitement of all concerned was evident.

In the general discussion that followed Tim Heitshue from western New York managed to change the drift of things a little by mentioning Colonel Sumner whom he chanced to know.

‘The United States army will protect these people’, shouted Tim, ‘it’s United States soil *I* reckon’.

‘The United States Army does *not* protect them’, said Mr. Dennis.

‘Bedad thin’, said Mike, ‘wait till corn-planting’s over and we’ll go down and take a turn at thim lads too! How far is it to Kansas?’

But before any one could answer this decidedly practical query, the vigorous summons of Miss Magagan’s bell sounded out even above the din of voices; Squire Marks said he had something to say, but would wait a more convenient time. Meantime he advised that we wait further news before taking radical measures. The Secretary of War was a man of upright character and would deal justly in Kansas. The Secretary of War was a man named Jefferson Davis!

The ringing bell sounded assembly; every bench and seat taken as at the opening. Miss Magagan made certain announcements for the week. Then the violinist once more stood and played a simple air, St. Martins it was, and as before at the simple movement of the bow and, ‘*now*’, all joined in singing, stanza after stanza —

By cool Siloam’s shady rill.

And when they had sung a hymn they went out.

Mrs. Lyon and her guest were among the last to leave the house, the latter to speak appreciatively to the young superintendent, and especially to ask Misses Magagan and Simpson, ‘Do the children understand what they learn?’

‘Perhaps not; one can not suppose they do; but they will appreciate later. Meantime they have the best of English, and are interested; by persistence they learn how to learn.’

XIV

THE RETURN

MRS. LYON was sitting with her guest on the porch on Tuesday afternoon busied as only housekeepers may be. She was really very nervous and very unhappy. To go steadily forward, day after day, betraying no anxiety whatever although constantly worried by a situation for which she was in no way responsible and could in no manner control was difficult indeed. Mr. Lyon should have been at home days ago, and she had no word of him at all; and when he should come, how could she know that he would not come as he went, all unattended? She had no reason, other than her guest's expectations, to believe that he knew anything at all of 'Robert'; and yet she had felt obliged to act every moment as if with the confidence born of information certain. She had undertaken and successfully carried alike her own anxiety and that of the stranger brought so unexpectedly to her hospitality and care. The humor of the case at first sustained her, but serious considerations had begun to throng her mind.

It must be said, meanwhile, that she had a thoroughly sensible and appreciative guest; not only willing and anxious to take care of herself, but lending her hostess aid in every possible way to the accomplishment of the daily drudgery of the farm. In fact, she really was at home, although she did not know it, and was learning duties which were to be hers for years to come in the development of a great community. Mrs. Lyon had until now been doing the work of two and Mr. Lyon knew

it. His present concern was to inaugurate changes, unknown to his wife, uncertain of detail even for himself.

But — whether to set the table for *two* or *more* was Mrs. Lyon's present problem as the two women sat busy at a common task upon the porch. In her inmost soul she had little thought that more than two places would be needed. If Mr. Lyon were coming to-day he should have appeared long ago on the road toward the store, which, since mid-day, she had watched incessantly. True, there had been no rain; the Ramsgate boys were planting corn with a new, blue-painted 'planter' drawn by horses; she wished she could see how it worked. She thought there was a boy seated low on the machine, but its passage, to and fro across the field, stirred a cloud of dust so that she knew the country was drying; the roads were drying: they must be. Mr. Lyon might come some other way? Not likely. She had just made up her mind to set four places anyway — to do less would be so disheartening — when, who should turn the corner of the house but Mr. Lafferty.

'Good evening Ma'am; both of yez, Ma'am! Sure an it's a foine day, but did yez know annything of Mr. Lyon? I have nothing now to do at all, at all. The weather is good, the ground is foine; yes Ma'am, and I got the new "planter" yesterday; Mr. Simpson and I did set it together. It'll work Ma'am; all the neighbors do be planting with it; I heard them talking at the porch, them as turned out. It will do better, they do be saying, when it gets used to us Ma'am; but I would like to see Mr. Lyon. I've plowed my own bit of ground and Lida and little Paddy does be plantin' it this blessed minute, I believe; but I'd like that "planter" goin': I would Ma'am.'

‘So should I, Mike, like to see that myself. I look for Mr. Lyon any time, but you know how the roads have been, worse in Illinois by far than here. You know the flats east of the river; they crossed only last week, was it, with a skiff. But he’ll be here; he is as anxious to be planting corn as you can possibly be; I know it is getting late: however, there’s still time, even if we do not get the seed in the ground for a few days, there will still be a good crop. Our seed is good; Mr. Lyon does little replanting.’

‘I knows it, Ma’am, I knows it; but it might start to raining again, and the weeds would catch us. Besides Ma’am I do be marking it all; only one way this time, you know, for that “planter”, Ma’am’.

Mr. Lafferty stood silent for a moment as if in serious meditation. He evidently had something more on his mind and was hesitating whether the time were appropriate for its disclosure. ‘Was that all?’ said Mrs. Lyon, at length, ‘Is there anything else?’

‘Well, not much, Ma’am, but down at the porch last night, Ma’am, they did be saying that Mr. Lyon had bought out them Carob b’ys, bad ’cess to the rogues that they are; and Mr. Simpson is down there all day to-day to see what I am to do on the new place. I was to say, Ma’am, that you should tell Mr. Lyon to go down there the first thing when he comes home. That’s all, Ma’am’, and Mr. Lafferty disappeared around the corner as he came.

The ladies sat silent a moment, then Mrs. Lyon chanced to lift her glance to the horizon far across and down the valley. She was looking for nothing on those roadless hills; there was usually naught there to be seen, save possibly a small herd of cattle strolling slowly

through the grass; but at this moment she noted some moving object that fixed immediately her attention. She stood up; held her hand above her eyes and gazed intently, then turned to the lady beside her, exclaiming, 'There's Mr. Lyon!'

Her guest made for an instant no reply. All color fled her face; her hands rested upon her lap; she seemed like one that dreamed. Then all at once recovering from the pleasing shock, the color returned as she exclaimed, 'Whaur? whaur? Oh are ye sure? I see naething, naething ava!' When at last she discerned a low, dark object moving against the evening sky she was no better satisfied. 'How can you say it is Mr. Lyon or say what it is; miles away, so small, so far and so dim?'

But her hostess reassured her: 'I am certain', she replied, 'I recognize him by the outfit — its shape, its size, and general appearance. If not Mr. Lyon, it is some one else driving his team. There's no road there; he is driving on the open prairie far beyond where you were walking, away beyond the parrot tree. He's far away, he has before him a round-about way, but he'll be here before long, before another half-hour; let us go get supper, shall we?'

Her hostess hoped by this most friendly invitation to relieve the evident, tense feeling of her guest, to whom her sudden and entirely unexpected announcement brought a crisis — really very little comfort. If it were Mr. Lyon, had Robert met him indeed? And was he really on the way? Such questions must remain as yet impossible of answer; the vehicle, whatever it was, and however laden, was simply following the highland under the declining sun, it could be seen, the peculiar smallness of the horses noted; that was all.

The ladies withdrew to the dining room and kitchen, while the supposed travelers continued their northern way, and were soon, by reason of intervening depressions, entirely lost from view. In course of half an hour, however, the little equipage came again to view still away to the west, dodging in and out of vision, following the winding valley of the creek — there were two men traveling, sure enough, sitting side by side; but who were they? Mr. Lyon was certainly one.

‘The stranger is not a large man’, said Mrs. Lyon.

‘Robert issna large’, said Mrs. McQ, in a somewhat downcast manner which caught the attention of her hostess, who most carelessly, but far from thoughtlessly went on: ‘Well, whoever it is he is certainly small; not much above Mr. Lyon’s shoulders; he is perhaps a neighbor boy on his way home; Mr. Lyon always has some one riding with him’.

‘He dissna hae the hat of a laddie’, was the reply; and again Mrs. Lyon noticed a peculiar hesitancy in the manner of her guest and was somewhat surprised to find her turning as if to leave the porch, the only point of vantage whence the unfolding of their problem could be noted.

‘I’m like to greet’, she said, and then Mrs. Lyon knew.

It is, of course, well known that every language used by civilized men finds in some special locality a certain grace of utterance elsewhere unknown, perhaps even unsuspected. Thus France has its Paris, Germany its Hanover, even its Andreasburg! England — well, Dr. Johnson wrote to ‘Bozzy’, ‘The Scotch *write* English wonderfully well’. Everybody of course knows as much; but every true Scot knows that it is in Stirling that that noble dialect is uttered with greater elegance and pre-

cision than anywhere else in all the wide, wide world; or if he does not know it, at least every man in Stirling has the information! In somewhat similar wise, in the north of Ireland country, County Antrim claims the same linguistic prestige, while, in touch with County Antrim, Carrickfergus admits of no superiority whatever. Carrickfergus speaks pure English — the English of Carrickfergus!

Now our present heroine was a Carrickfergusian; of that fact none more proud than she. Accordingly, when the matter of discussion chanced to be less formal, when the lady was unembarrassed, or even when a little bit excited, her language naturally took on the more vigorous, more precise expression, as heard on the shores of Carrick; but when at leisure and especially when under the restraints incident to the presence of strangers unsympathetic, foreigners so to speak, she knew well how to use the dialect of those less favored, of men limited for instance to what may be learned from schools and books, since with these unnatural but more recently popular devices for shaping our common speech, she had also been all her life more or less familiar.

Davie, as we familiarly called Mr. David Baird, was in these particulars, almost as fortunate as our guest. He came direct from Ballymena, and knew quite well how English should be spoken, but long residence abroad, especially years of converse with less skilled Americans in Iowa and Ohio, had made restraint habitual. For instance, his present treatment — or mistreatment — of the letter 'r', no more expressed the thronging, rushing, rhythmic torrent of that resonant liquid consonant, when rightly spoken, than a creeping rivulet of the prairie utters forth the music of a mountain stream, all blocked

by boulders! David said the impulse still was present; he restrained it, but he often felt the strain!

Her guest disappeared and left Mrs. Lyon to watch from the porch alone.

Half an hour later four people found place around the table in the dining room; two of them were men, and he about to take seat at the right of Mrs. Lyon seemed as he stood beside his stately spouse short indeed.

Mr. McQ or Brother McQ, as by virtue of a singular error, he came presently to be called, was the most cheery, fortunate, lively little man to be met within a day's journey. For years to come his many natural gifts, his wide experience, and above all his practical good sense, unflagging courage, and unfailing good humor made him often the very salvation of our community; and this in days when the community needed saving, when optimism seemed a virtue impossible — was not the country on the verge of ruin?

But in some ways, in the case of our hero, Nature was thought less kind. As intimated, he was of diminutive stature. He was a well-proportioned man, but possibly not much more than five feet, six inches high. This was a grievance to him though he did not tell it, but more a sorrow to his ambitious wife. He had strong features, a florid complexion, and abundant reddish hair which rose above his square forehead *a la pompadour*, and, grace to the fashion of his shaving, was continued in a marvelous abundant hirsute border entirely around his face.

In that fine day, beards were the rule; almost the only exceptions on the prairie offered forsooth by red men, 'noble' more or less. However, some of our men did betimes submit to partial tonsure; denuded areas some-

times large, the mouth apparently the center of incomplete though circumambient reaping. Nor without distinguished precedent. Did not our own Horace Greeley here hold up the glass of fashion, and Whittier? So also Tyndall and Herbert Spencer, grave Gladstone too betimes; not to mention Ulric Varnbuhler, Amen Hatep III, II, I, H'm!—or those earlier heroes who set the fine, glabrate, emergent style ere ever Egypt was!

Moreover this use of the razor about mouth and lips was, by some of our foremost agronomists deemed prudent—in many ways; to say nothing of convenience in some social observances, distinctness of utterance, etc., etc.!

The effect was well illustrated by the genial face of Mr. Ramsgate; and perchance the more full-orbed, rubicund countenance of our new arrival attracted less attention, not only because not novel, but chiefly because of a pair of fine large gray eyes, which out from beneath huge, shaggy eyebrows looked forth to greet the world, if friendly, with a smile; if hostile, undismayed!

The name of Brother McQ was variously spelled out. He himself wrote it in three letters as here. Indeed, as he quizzically affirmed, such orthography was ample this side of the sea where, as would seem, all proper names are curtailed to the convenience of the public; brevity the soul of wit.

His neighbors protested; the schoolmistress and the postmaster conferred but could not agree; the man of 'letters', evidently taking his cue from the sound, wrote bluntly McCue or McKew; while Miss Magagan, who for reasons of her own had looked into these things a little, set down Macue or Makew, or possibly Mchugh. What possible sense in that unavailing 'c' before an-

other 'C' or 'K' she said. Should she forsooth write McGegan or McGeohegan? McQ must do better than this!

Meantime the victim himself was wiser. Well he knew how far his much prized patronymic, Maquhyddr, would transcend the limited scholarship of the prairie's wisest, to say nothing of probabilities in the matter of enunciation. He spared us: McQ he started, McQ it was to the chapter's finish; and as for the sobriquet—well, that for some other page.

McQ's father was a gardener in Wales where gardening means intelligence as well as industry and toil. To his son not only did he give such schooling as the community offered, not only did he train him in all the arts of the garden then in England known and practiced, but sent him to the continent to study the gardens of Holland and France.

Robert, in such wander-year, learned much, if not just what he sought—who ever did?—and came home richer by the experience; presently found employment in the gardens of Belfast; found a wife; sought a world as good as new—the State of Illinois, as we have seen. A man of physical force, of gentle mind, of gentler speech; tolerant to the last degree and yet inflexible in the rigidity with which he retained his own ideas, and enforced them upon—himself! A lover of flowers, of music; but above all he loved a horse!

The relief with which Mrs. Lyon met the travelers at the gate may not be told. Mr. Lyon met Mrs. McQ and she quickly led her husband to the now familiar guest-room; heard his explanations and told of her own good fortune.

A few minutes later as the strangers entered the

dining room, his first and most agreeable duty was to thank his hostess for her kindness to his wife. He thought — old-country fashion — that he had some gracious things to say; but he got no farther than to say: 'I'm sure I'm grateful. Alison says only by accident are we here!' — when the impetuous Mr. Lyon broke in: 'Accident! Accident! in Iowa we try to turn our very accidents into good fortune especially for the other fellow; as Jennie said when she upset the sleigh, and "broke the ice!"'

McQ was silent. Not so Mr. Lyon; he went right on: 'You know, Hester, Iowa is a lucky accident. Look at the flowers and grasses. Native crops, I call them; how splendid they all are! They never fail! It is our luck to change them to wheat and oats and corn. Now we see cattle ranges only; but we'll have meadows for our cattle; every man his own, the finest in the world; but the farmers are not here!

'Men say the folks *are* coming; maybe they are, as the railways cross the river; but these comers by rail all want to live *in town*; I want them to live in the country. Men live in town because they think it better there. They see our sod-houses, cabins, and straw-sheds, and do not dream of the possibilities of the prairie farm; they'll never share the triumph till we show them! The Simpsons think as I do; we're making a beginning. Two years ago, we agreed we must pick our men, if our plans are to succeed.

'I went out to find men! I went overland and not by boat to St. Louis, because I wanted farmers.

'I went this time because, everybody now knows, there came a chance to buy the Carob prairie. Right now is our time, and here are four of us to start with!'

‘But listen’, said Mrs. Lyon, quite as enthusiastic as her spouse, ‘listen! I must tell you what I’ve been doing. Since you went away Mrs. Landsman’s father and sister have come here from Illinois and I have employed both of them. I had no idea what you might find; I knew the need; so Bettina will help me and Mr. Samedi is for you.’

Mr. Lyon clapped the table; ‘it could not be better! I have so much to do! I wish we had at least forty people!

‘There are four sections in that piece, and Gerrit and I see already twelve or fifteen beautiful farms, each by its owner tilled, all glorious with wheat and corn, barley and flax, what you will. All the ground needs is plowing and seed, and the Mississippi soon to be covered with cheap logs from Minnesota to make lumber for all the houses and buildings we shall need — and to build a town besides! Nothing finer!’

‘Mr. Otto, my St. Louis buyer, is always telling me of the great things in Holland, France, and Germany; great churches, “masterpieces”, he calls them, of Norman genius long ago. We poor men know nothing about big churches; don’t need them; but we know about farming; so why not show the world a masterpiece of tillage when we make Iowa a garden, as we can!

‘I was very enthusiastic when I left home; but everywhere I have been I heard men talking of war! Of course, if we *must* have war our plans may come to nothing. But even if we do have war, which, when I stop to consider, I too greatly fear, if we do have war, the matter will simply be delayed; the farmers will be here as soon as the trouble passes, and this part of Iowa shall become the garden of the Lord; *I know it!*’

‘But there won’t be any war’, said Mrs. Lyon, ‘our people have too much sense. Things look bad in Kansas; but that will not effect the country as a whole. Buchanan is sure to be the next President, and he is an honest and upright man. You yourself say, “no war if Buchanan is elected” but — did you have rain while you were gone?’

‘Oh no; we had not *much* rain — but, if no one comes to use our land, we can gradually plow it up and put it in wheat. My brother has a new machine, we shall get one right away. No more toilsome reaping and mowing; no more swinging of cradle and scythe; all done by horses with a machine! We shall have one in two weeks, at the river; I’ve ordered it myself. But the farmers will come, they can’t help it if they see this country. Prospects are fine! fine!! fine!!!

‘Do you think the wise men will come from the east this time or will they come belated, jogging over the trackless prairie from the west?’ said Mrs. Lyon.

‘Besides Father Blew has found out somewhere that there’s a new kind of cane to make sugar. He heard we could get seed from the government. So just before I left home we ordered from Washington a pound of seed. With great trouble we found and sent a five dollar gold-piece for it in a letter; and he’s waiting for it! They call it “Chinese sugar cane”. It is guaranteed to grow wherever corn will grow. If the Chinese can make sugar out of it, what can’t we do! and then! Just think of that! Every farmer to make his own sugar! No more of that brown New Orleans stuff, so wet that you can take most of it up with a blotting paper, what is left mostly sand; what do you think of that, Hester! And there’s a piece of that Carob land

that will just do; it's their old herding ground; a little sandy, but not a bit of grass on it for years, and that rich!!! If that seed is in the country and we can get some, we'll plant it quick and we'll have sugar right off, before anybody knows what's what! That's what we'll do!'

'I would not interrupt you for a moment', said his wife, 'but really now, what did you do with that sugar-loaf that Luke gave you for me? He always sends me one; where is it this time? I need it right now; I want to give you a hot cup of tea; that you poured out in your saucer is cold long ago. Where's my sugar?'

At this juncture Mr. McQ could refrain no longer; he laughed outright; his wife seemed entirely bewildered; she could not at all make out what it was all about. But a knock at the kitchen door just then changed the whole drift of things.

'Come in! come in!' called Mr. Lyon without rising or so much as turning his head, 'Come in!'; but Mrs. Lyon rose and started to the door to be greeted by Mr. Lafferty: 'Here Ma'am are some things we do be findin' on the tail of the buckboard, whin we washed it Ma'am; and here's sure something for you; it does be havin' your name on it, and was tied on wid the picket rope.'

'Oh! it's all mud', said the lady.

'Mud, is it; the ponies were that muddy you couldn't see thim, at all, at all! I thought I was bringin' in iverything before, but here we did be findin' this box, looks like a caffin; maybe a fiddle or a violin, wanst the mud comes off it; sure and it was under the seat.'

Mrs. Lyon stopped not to talk. She hastily stripped off the outer muddy wrapping of her package only to

find a solid cone, weighing several pounds, smoothly encased in thick blue paper, clean and dry. Opened once more there stood on the table a block of whiteness, to the housekeeper's gladdened eyes the very perfection of beauty, shining like marble, Angelo's marble, in crystalline symmetry — a sugar-loaf all the way from London!

To break from the base a block which might be further divided for immediate use at table was but the work of a fraction of a minute, and before those seated were well aware of her intent, behold her serving hot tea all the way round exclaiming: 'Now we *shall* have tea, Chinese tea, whether or not we have Chinese sugar; dear Mr. Lyon! Let us to our suppers. Then we shall hear all about how men in these days travel southeast, and return from the northeast, all without circumnavigating the world at all; you were not quite long enough gone for that!'

Mr. Lyon fell suddenly silent. He was abashed at the sudden revelation of his entire forgetfulness, not to say negligence in fulfillment of his brother's trust. Besides he not a little feared the probable merry jesting of his wife. But whatever rebuke that lady might have had in mind was for the present laid aside in consideration of her guests. She merely went on to say that unless Miss Blew might have a little to be used for sick people, she supposed there was not a pound of loaf sugar on the whole prairie. 'But, Mark! tell us about the ponies!'

'*Mark*' was peremptory; there was nothing else for it now; Mr. Lyon must tell his story, but — 'Let's go and see the horses, McQ, let's go and see the horses; after that, if need be, we can talk the night away.'

XV

DREAMS AND SHADOWS

‘MR. LYON has stories to fill a book’, said Mrs. Lyon sometimes, but not many knew as did she, that the remark was quite within the limits of truth. Was not Mr. Lyon older than the State of Illinois? Was not his native Beardstown depot of supplies for the thrice notorious, but happily much forgotten Black Hawk War? True, as is quite usual in campaigns of every sort, the supplies did not reach the base until the war was over, and then were perhaps diverted to meet necessities discoverable nearer by; Mr. Lyon knew about that!

To the unfortunate Black Hawk, hurried into battle, as does appear, one skirmish more or less made little difference, even though the United States called it war! In the woods of Wisconsin he fought his last battle and lost! His people were massacred! So much *he* knew.

Mr. Lyon did not know that; but he could tell far more. He saw bold cavaliers go forth to win that war; some stirrupless; the illustrious captain — straps all too short, quite zig-zag-mounted, one must fear; riding far. Too late; too late; how fortunate! destined to find nor foe nor combat field — thievish rogues instead, stealing before one’s unobservant eyes one’s very steeds of battle and sending weary, but all unglorious troopers back on foot to better guarded banks of Sangamon and Spoon. Mr. Lyon knew about that; he witnessed the return!

Oh yes, Mr. Lyon had many stories: sometimes of river, forest, and plain; sometimes of ‘vandals’, Illinois

vandals, Indians who plagued the left bank of the great river; Indian stories; all to the disadvantage of the red man, to be sure.

Mr. Lyon told how farmers were shot at the plow-handles in the early morning when robins were singing; how in the quiet evening, as grouse were calling and from the harvest field the loaded wagon slowly homeward turned, peaceful toilers seated aloft on golden sheaves fell sudden to the ground, shot by dusky foes till then all unsuspected; or, worse than all, he told how the stars of midnight sometimes saw the whole countryside ablaze; barns, granaries, stacks, houses, at once in flames, the fleeing owners, men, women, and children hunted; only the owls awake when, with perhaps one final cry, all at last fell silent. Such stories were repeated on the porch until every farmer could affirm the ready judgment; 'No Indian's good until he's dead!'

But, once upon a time at the Lyceum, the program failed. In emergency Father Blew was called. He talked about 'war', which, to begin with, he said, characterized the very lowest sort of human living in this world — barbarism, savagery. 'For men who have reached the common sense stage of enlightenment, aggressive war is not to be thought of.

'To undertake war, except in sheer self-defense, is to relapse to the dreadful abyss, the fearsome horror and cruelty of barbaric night: but self-defense is still a necessity; at times, and all with best intentions, we find ourselves in war.

'As a nation we may say that our wars have been kindled generally overseas; all such now past, we hope. Even Indian wars were related to the age-long jealousies of Europe. Pontiac's uprising went with Frederick's

seven-year conflict: on this side the sea, the Indian sided with the French whom he thought the better neighbor. Tecumseh's struggle grew out of our war with England in 1812. Tecumseh, as I think, was a good man, a trustworthy man; but he made one great mistake — he went to war! He went to war, and perished, as did his pupil Black Hawk.

'Had even English and Americans been wise enough to settle their affairs in peace, Tecumseh and his people had been saved and their friends the Cherokees, Choctaws, Creeks besides; the best natives of North America had gone on to civilization, and presently become part of our citizenship by no means the least esteemed. By war we have lost all those people, a loss to common humanity, inexcusable!

'Men say savages are dreadful! they take no prisoners! they simply kill everybody they can find! Tecumseh's Indians at Fort Meigs did not do so; but, in how many cases did the Puritans and the English do the same! they descended to the barbarian's plane of war! In the Pontiac rising, when Governor Amherst learned that the English outposts had been taken and destroyed, he officially ordered, "take no prisoners". Say we not well that war is savagery? It has been always so in Europe: ask Magdeburg; ask the Palatinate.

'Humanity, civilization, to say nothing of enlightenment, does not shine in war', said Father Blew.

Mr. Lyon did not hear this speech, but when his wife reported it he smiled. 'I think a great deal of Father Blew', he said, 'probably the Indians have always taken the usual way to peace; but I'm afraid a white man's war is right now close at hand, from which not one of us can escape, denounce it as we do. Father Blew knows

this as well as I do. I suppose savages will then come in again; they always do! Father Blew knew and liked Tecumseh; but he never mentions the American Bottom!’

But for Mrs. McQ, now actually as by courtesy, quite at home, eased from fear, rested and happy, life indeed began anew. Scarce could she wait for morning to see Mr. Lyon’s holdings, to enter upon her part in the realization of his plans. She wanted to see him, to hear him right away; but it was dark ere the men came in. It was cool, and a blaze in the fireplace, even without much heat, shone and vied with the candle lamp we know. Mrs. Lyon did what she could to meet the questioning of her excited guest: ‘Where is the great holding? Is it an estate without a mansion? Are there gardens? — mayhap a park?’

Much disappointed, she learned that the estate, the mansion, the gardens were yet to be. ‘A wild prairie marred by lines of crooked posts supporting long pieces of rusty wire; an old weather-beaten one-room house; a stove pipe, using a metal window pane, goes elbowing out; log stables, stockades, sheds down by the woods, for cattle — such the contribution cow-men make to this rising State of Iowa — the background for a “dime novel”’; just a little, perhaps, of the weird, unseemly crudity with which some men see fit to travesty the prairie pioneer’, said Mrs. Lyon.

‘No’, she went on to say, ‘there’s nothing out there to please anybody unless he knows an opportunity when he sees it; if he knows and can see that, then it’s tremendous! — if only — there is no war!’

Her guest, startled by the mention of war, and having doubtless still in mind the sun-browned, black-eyed little wards of Miss Magagan, asked if there were many In-

dians in Iowa. 'Oh, not many; here come the men; Mr. Lyon can tell you about Indians.'

But Mr. Lyon, even if he heard the remark, paid less attention. He was busy telling McQ about 'Chicago, now that we have a railroad, handy as St. Louis; better in some ways; two markets always better than one! Chicago, right direction; east!'

A pair of waiting chairs, one on each side the fireplace were more compelling. The two men sat down; the younger silent; Mr. Lyon soon became so. Like a boy he was, in his joy over a new-found world. Indian stories aside, he talked as we have seen of Iowa and almost nothing else; and when silent, no doubt, he was forever entertained by beautiful, shifting, spreading visions of field and farm; his ponies in droves upon the sloping pastures, cattle in herds upon the richer meadows by the streams, groves and orchards at once the shelter and charm of every hilltop; by the highway, the farmer's home half-hidden by decorative planting—such pictures forever engaged his waking hours, especially in these later days when all plans seemed just ready to spring to realization from the very ground!

Only after the lapse of some minutes did he this evening become conscious of his new surroundings, prompted no doubt by the dim echo of words heard as he entered the room, but not perceived: 'What was that you said, Hester?'

Now Hester did not care to discuss the Indians; not she; at least, not just now; so she naturally changed the subject. 'Have you seen a fire like that, since you went off? And how did the ponies serve you?'

'Fire! you've seen Tennessee', suddenly exclaimed the husband. 'You've seen Tennessee! he's told you about

the fire! Those ponies are Arabian, I'm sure of it now. They were caught in the biggest fire ever seen in Iowa.' Mr. Lyon stopped. His wife's query gave him the very opportunity he craved, and yet as he began to make reply and the whole answer to the query flashed upon his mind he was completely startled; the experience of days came in a moment across his brain!

He had gone forth to promote, if he could, the enterprise already sketched, to make vision a reality. His success was partial; but he had seen so much, experienced so much all-unexpected — the very thought of it startled him! His face fell, took on unwonted pallor, then unwonted flush. His wife noted it not without concern; but without other evidence of excitement he went on: 'You know Hester I have no faith in dreams; but if it hadn't been for a dream — a dream — a dream!' These words were spoken with great slowness; he hesitated, then went on, 'and Tennessee!

'I dreamed of ponies. That was natural enough perhaps, but I dreamed I saw them speeding! speeding across a wide and perfectly level plain, it seemed a prairie full of flowers just like ours to-day; but the light was strange, neither sun-light, nor moon-light, and I saw no shadows, and yet everything was plain as day. I saw the driver; I didn't know him; he was dressed in red — like a wizard at St. Louis in the play — the ponies went faster and faster; smaller they seemed, by distance smaller and smaller still, they seemed at last to creep; while their driver grew larger and redder until the very light, like setting sun, seemed red and at the horizon my ponies dropped below!

'But, before I could wake, the ponies came again; now they were scarlet, the driver gray, and all the prairie

dry, sere, and white, as in November, some frozen day before the snow. But the driving was furious as before. Faster and faster my ponies fled or flew, till, all of a sudden, about them on every side the prairie took fire, high as the sky it blazed; then all went dark, motionless, black, empty, as things forgot! Oh! how can I forget!

‘I jumped from bed into an uproar the like I’ve never heard; my room, light as day; fire a block away, the very block where I had left my horses!

‘Half-dressed I ran; found Tennessee in the barn and by his quiet help got my ponies out!

‘By help of Tennessee I got my ponies out! They took their harness and walked right out of that barn, one on each side of me, nose on shoulder; it was beautiful! The big horses tore in and out like mad; if it hadn’t been for Tennessee they’d have crushed us!

‘Oh, yes; the big horses burned up—some of them!

‘Do you know I think, Hester, horses are much like men; small horses are nearly always smarter than big ones! I have always said my Indian pony stock was Arabian; I am sure of it now; horse sense saved my ponies! Horse sense doesn’t go by weight!

‘Oh, yes; we reached the buckboard. It was after midnight, as I said, but the crowd was so great that we were still in danger after we got out-doors. But Tennessee took me to his stage barn far up the hill, and we were safe.’

McQ smiled; he was too polite to laugh; his wife looked as if she had willingly taken the risk, had Robert been ‘a two-inch’ taller!

‘You were out till morning?’

‘Oh no; but I did not sleep for a long, long time; and

when finally I slept it was but to be roused again by visions.

‘I dreamed I was awake and looking on our beautiful prairies, blooming as they are. I saw my ponies; all together now; I counted them, and the grazing herd moved noiselessly on a strange, unshadowed hill. There was no carriage, no driver; nor one that cared, nor I! only the horses, and the sun-less sky, and field illimitable, unchangeable; unchanging the while, though time dragged on and on! I was helpless, powerless in my fright, and when I woke up I wondered; was it I?’

‘I jumped; how glad! I looked from my window; fog and smoke everywhere but on the hills, and they looked brown, as when with a smoky glass we look at an eclipse; just as I dreamed, the shadows were thin and few!’

‘All was still. I saw nobody: the whole town had overslept!’

‘I hastened to find Tennessee; but not until we had taken breakfast and were all ready for the business of the day, each for his road, did I begin to shake off the strange depression that somehow held my soul. I never let on to Bracken, but I was as scared as a boy alone in a strange bed. I told him not to tell you.’

As Mr. Lyon reported, when he finally reached the ferry-landing everything was still strangely quiet. Not only was the town asleep, but there was not a boat, hardly a man was to be seen! A little breeze from the west sprang up and soon from bank and river the clouds of fog and smoke went flying; one could see from shore to shore, but on all the far, silvery surface, not a steamboat; nor boat of any sort, not even a ferry! However, close in, a few hundred yards up shore, he presently saw the ferry tied to the roots of a great sycamore tree

that over-arched the stream. No soul in sight; but the noise of hammers tempted investigation. The ponies were made fast, and, from a projecting rocky bank a little above the prow, Mr. Lyon sprang plump upon the deck!

XVI

THE FERRYMAN

‘HELLO there! What in this world are *you* after?’ came as greeting from the opposite and farther side of the boat, where a keen-eyed dark-visaged giant rose, quick, as if to resent intrusion. ‘What *are* you after anyhow? Don’t you know any better than to jump on a boat when she’s tied up away from the wharf? We’re working back here: what do you want anyway; you knocked my work all galley west; what are you about?’

The vehement manner, stern expression, and threatening figure brought the intruder to a standstill. Not that the boatman was ill-looking; he was not, not at all. He was good-looking, indeed. He had regular features, a high forehead crowned with abundant upstanding grizzly hair. A clean ‘hickory’ shirt, turned in at collar and breast, with short-cut sleeves, exposed the bronze columnar neck, the rounded shoulders, the powerful arms of a natural athlete. Mr. Lyon was perhaps not frightened, but he was not a little startled.

‘I want the ferryboat and the ferryman; I want to get across the river.’

Oddly enough now, the whole manner of the fierce boatman changed. He smiled. Through all the bronze and brown, the open life of a thousand generations, a tide of carmine rose and flushed and shone; but Mr. Lyon saw it not; not then; he was too much alarmed; looking only for chance to get away was he.

‘Is that all! Well; I’m sorry, friend, but my engine gave out last night, on the other side, on the last trip

for the day. I waited till morning, fearing I might be carried down stream. There's 'most no current over there; so I used what power I had to push up shore as far as I could, until I met the current I wanted, heading for Iowa. Then I ran ashore, waited for morning, and so with the current slid down an hour or two ago. No business to-day anyhow, on account of the fire — I suppose you know — so I'm laid up for repairs; I want your help.'

If our friend was alarmed before he was now simply amazed. He stood silent a moment, his perplexity evident.

'Don't you know me Mr. Lyon? Don't you know me?'

'No sir! I do not! I never saw you before!'

Now it was the boatman's turn: he looked crestfallen, but was too shrewd to admit defeat. 'Howdy', he said, extending a friendly hand, 'How d'y.'

Mr. Lyon took his hand, looked at him but said nothing; a quick, sharp call, 'Cherry', came from the rear of the boat.

'Sit down! Sit down! he wants help. You'll know me when I get back.'

Our farmer was very much inclined to leave the boat forthwith; but he had no place else to go, nothing whatever to do, and curiosity got the better of resentment. 'Cherry'; who could the man be? Surely he had never known a man with name like that — 'Cherry?'

The river was magnificent; so silent, majestic, beautiful! He had always loved it, and as he looked the passing clouds lay mirrored there, moving slowly northward, and involuntarily he began to dream of those other rivers, those wondrous rivers of the skies, celestial streams forever flowing north somehow, somewhere to

fill perennial fountains for all streams below. What a system! How simple! How immense! How silent! In the service of man, how vital, yet seemingly how absolutely beyond all human effort or control! He began to revolve the problem in his mind; the number of such fountains and their wide dispersal came to view as he thought of the river's branches, the great Ohio, and the Missouri greater still, and the scores and hundreds, thousands of lesser streams spread far and wide upon the ground, and he was just likening it to the shadow of some giant, ramose, leafless tree, spread out upon a silent, moonlit field of snow, when lo! approaching all unnoted, the boatman stood beside him.

'Hello! Took longer'n I thought. Jim can finish now; I want you to take dinner with me!'

Mr. Lyon, more nonplussed than ever, said, 'Oh; it is about noon, isn't it? I must feed those ponies. When do you make the first trip after noon?'

'One o'clock; I'll take care of the ponies. You just come along with me. We'll drive to the landing and bring back a bucket of coal, and we'll have just an hour for dinner.'

If our friend were surprised before, he was now amazed; 'the cool impudence of the man; asking me to bring him coal! But then; he invited me to dinner and the ponies too! I want to find out who he is! — Cherry? Cherry?'

'I do not know you at all; I am sure I never before even heard of a man of your name! I think you'd better excuse me; I'll find some place to feed the ponies, and it matters less whether I dine; breakfast was very late.'

'The very best place to feed your ponies burned up last night; I have feed. Come right on! I'll explain as

we go on; I need your help; other men here don't know my story; you do!

This was still more perplexing, but Mr. Lyon felt able to take care of himself, 'at least in daytime', as he said, and he followed the stranger as he imperiously strode along, now crowned with his planter's hat turned up on either side and by a shoestring laced across the top. Once seated, straight, erect on the frail now bending buckboard, as the frisking ponies went springing to their task, he began: 'Were you ever in St. Louis?'

'Yes: I used to go there in days gone by.'

'Have you a hickory cane?'

'Oh yes; we were all Jackson Democrats; I still have and prize my father's old Jackson cane.'

'Did you ever carry it to St. Louis?'

'I believe I did! I was slightly lame from an accident; one time I carried that cane and nearly lost it too! But for a boy in a skiff, enjoying the roll in the wake of our landing steamboat, I should have lost it. I have never carried it since. That ten-year old, at some risk, caught my cane as it drifted down and brought it to me as I reached the landing. He was a lovely boy! I think the finest looking boy I ever saw, so well proportioned, perfectly erect he stood before me, clean-cut limbs, handsome features, shining eyes and jet black hair; the most beautiful child I ever saw! I have no son. Instantly I loved that boy, wanted him, but could not get him; I loved him, love him still wherever he is! But that was long ago, fifteen or twenty years.'

'That boy was and is my son!'

At this moment they reached the ferry-landing. The fleet ponies had no thought of stopping. Only the sudden 'Whoa!' of the boatman recalled to our friend the

immediate purpose of his driving and caused him to draw his lines, leaving him speechless, to follow with his eyes only his strange companion already dismounted and hurrying toward a coalshed near the water. 'We'll talk more later', he cried, 'turn around and I'll join you in a jiffy!'

Mr. Lyon could only do as he was told. He had not long to wait. In a very few minutes the ferryman came clambering up the shore bearing a box with perhaps fifty pounds of coal. The driver would have gone to his assistance but could not leave his horses; he must perforce, and yet with difficulty, suppress all expression of astonishment. He was very uncomfortable, but finally exclaimed, as the coal-box was lodged behind, 'Are you Ross? Cherokee Ross who came out with the Cherokees to Girardeau?'

'I'm Trotter, Cherokee Trotter. I have an Indian name but General Scott's men called me Trotter because once I walked from Tennessee to the Ohio River, when I had a horse! I told you all about it once! Do you know me *now*? If you do, we'll put off this coal, and with it the conversation till after dinner; then we can talk at leisure in quiet. Drive up Watling Street only a short distance; we'll 'tend to the ponies first. There!' And the ponies stopped at the self-same door whence they had recently set out.

'Here's' where I live', said the ferryman as they reached the threshold of a little hotel across the street, with porches overlooking the boat-landing, 'here's where I live. Dinner is all ready.'

The hotel was of the better sort. On that day many shared the dining room's simple but abundant fare; but no one spoke; such the fashion of countryfolk, eating

in a dining room unfamiliar, strange. How Mr. Lyon longed to ask about that boy must be imagined, but he spoke not; was he not enjoined?

In quiet fashion, however, he ventured to mention his admiration of the river, of the clouds he saw moving north to keep the stream still going, as he thought.

‘I don’t know much about the Mississippi’, replied Cherry, ‘but I know that if we have clouds all winter, clouds and snow on the mountains, we are sure of plenty of water all summer in the Tennessee; if there are few clouds, we say there’ll be low water. The Mississippi just now is very high, pretty near “flood”; getting ready for “June rise”, I suppose; pretty early, because there has been plenty of rain.’

When our friends talked, everybody else listened. Just a little suspicious, each doubtless on his own errand bent; none had yet found a neighbor. One by one all disappeared; all but two. These were noted, outside, close together on the porch bench, engaged in converse strange, serious, subdued; all one-sided, our old acquaintance saying little; his attention rapt!

XVII

CRAZY — OR MERELY HUMAN

‘OH yes! the boy, Adair, you liked that boy! Oh yes; you invited him and me to supper; talked about him all the time, while he ran home to his grandmother for his coat — wanted him for your own, but you’ve forgotten even his name!

‘I’ll tell you about him, but you must remember first what you already know. Do you remember there was once a Cherokee Nation, a beautiful, moral, finally Christian people? They had a beautiful land, theirs from their fathers, through years, years not numbered; the Cherokee counts not dead years! They loved their flowers, their forests, their mountains, their springs, their streams? Do you remember?

‘The Tennessee, the Hiawassee, the Oconee, the Santaree, the Chattahoochee, do you remember these? Oh no! Oh no! How can you remember what you never saw, care nothing at all about! White men have very poor memories; they never remember all of the ten commandments at any one time; but of that beautiful land! that beautiful land! Cherokee!’

Mr. Lyon reported that he winced at this a little, but, like the wedding guest, he was bewitched, ‘he could not choose but hear’.

‘The people of Georgia wanted that beautiful land. They even proposed to kill the owners to get their mines and houses and farms. Yes; I remember Naboth’s vineyard, but Ahab got the vineyard! President Jackson, to prevent such wholesale murder, proposed to give us

new land and to take us to it, too. He sent Scott with an army to persuade us. General Scott was upon us before we knew it. He brought the Nation, about 20,000, all he could find, into one camp and began to send us on boats down the Tennessee River. It was summer by this time and very warm. Our people were dying by scores. They asked permission to wait for cooler weather, promising to go themselves, if he would leave troops for their protection. This was agreed to; but those already started were to go at once.

‘Because I could speak English, I was soon drafted to go with the marching soldiers, to act as aid in caring for the wretched men and women. I walked all the way from East Tennessee to the Ohio River, then was sent to Girardeau to help ferry the crowd across the Mississippi. This done, by permission, I returned to the Tennessee camp with a troop of cavalry, to look after the rest.

‘Imagine my feelings when at last I came again in sight of that city with flags on every side. There were 15,000 people there. It was cooler now. It was morning; the soldiers were on parade, and the band was marching and playing, but I saw and heard them not. In that great multitude, dwelling in tents and cabins, I looked only for my own!

‘At last I found them far out beneath a tree, by themselves, my mother and my son; that was all. My wife, her father, and her mother had disappeared, no one knew how or where. I saw them never again.

‘As the multitude prepared for the long march, I, of course, did what I could for my own. As we moved slowly along, my mother was left to care for that boy, but I saw her only occasionally. The autumn was fine;

we had abundant food and the soldiers were generally able to prevent the Christian, civilized whites from stealing the little personal property each was permitted to bring along. But no one ever saw all that moving pilgrimage at once! Sometimes, in early morning, in the more open country, those nearer the center of the column, from some high point might see on some hillside far ahead the winding line, and turning behold a similar spectacle far to the rear.

'At Nashville we were interrupted by the curious people — fine-dressed ladies with coachman, carriage, and horses, thronging the way — who came to "see the show". They wished they might see an army on the march, etc. They may one day! alas! they may! But from Nashville on we were much in the forest. The maples were turning to gold and our eyes were lightened; the sassafras, persimmon, and the papaw accompanied us all the way; the sweet gum cheered us with its glorious, reddening leaves like scarlet pennants far above us; Nature at least was kind; she stayed with us and we saw her glory; along the rivers, all the way, we were still at home.

'I had been a boatman on the Tennessee when we were prosperous and the cotton floated to Memphis and New Orleans; and as before, at Girardeau, I was boatman yet again. The company was weary now; it was smaller by far, of children almost none; the file moved slowly. Four days they were in crossing, steamboats, flatboats, a boatload at a time; then they disappeared in the Missouri forest, along the trail of those who had gone before, moving on, and on, and on!

'By good luck I was left to care for stragglers, to see that they crossed the river. For days and days I had

seen nothing of my own. But stragglers were many; and one evening as the sun reddened the smooth silent river, where I stood alone to look, my own stood beside me, and were glad!

‘I did not take them over; not for long. After a while, for services rendered I was allowed my freedom. I found work on the Mississippi River; found home for my mother and son in great St. Louis where you found us, and there I have been these years. The boy when you saw him was about twelve years old. Now do you know me?’

Cherry sprang to his feet right in front of his guest as he exclaimed, ‘I come from Hiawassee! from Hi-a-was-se-e-e!’ He pronounced the word in a most musical way. You people up north here know nothing of the most beautiful country God ever made. If He had it to do again with the same materials how could He do it any better? The Cherokees loved their country because they loved God. They were content!

‘My name is then Trotter, or Walker some call it. My tribe took its start when Adam and Eve first walked out of the garden gate and has been notorious all these six thousand years. My name is Trotter; I have heard of other names, the Cherokee knows them all; such as Leaper and Runner and Lion and Bear, but all healthy men trot or walk. Through all the Bible story, men go trotting; the prophet walked, the priest walked, and the King. All the great, the wise of earth, I’m told, went walking. The Cherokees have always walked, but did not by name declare it. On the steamboats I was Cherokee. For that name I was glad; “Cherry” for short — I was less glad. Adair, Adair, that was his mother’s name. She was kin of Ross in the big house down by

Chickamauga Creek. To-day the slaves of some white man are plowing his fields. Oh! you don't know me yet!

'Do you remember our talk that summer evening in St. Louis after the boy had gone home, as we sat upon the bench before the hotel, do you remember that? Steamboats were coming and going, but we did not see them; my boat was loading at the wharf; I was assistant to the captain, deck-steward, and waited for his signal, just as we're waiting a signal now. Do you remember what you said? You were silent then as now. But as the signal sounded you walked with me to the waiting gangway and then you said just one thing: "I'm sorry; but the Indian has to go; his civilization is a dream!"

'Oh sir, you have it wrong! Not the Indian; not the negro is at fault; it is the white man's never-resting greed of gold!

'What is happening now in your own State of Iowa? Do you see those people toiling yonder, pushing westward their loaded carts, men and women and little children? Who are these my brother, who are these? They are people obedient to the sentence of a white man's mob! a mob that defied the courts of Illinois as with our people the Georgians defied the courts of the United States! Ten years ago Nauvoo, now a ruin, was a city, the largest in Illinois, a flourishing, beautiful city. Its people were Americans, Englishmen, Scotchmen, not Indians, white people all! On the steamboat I passed that city more than often, often rejoicing in the beauty of its situation. Our pilot lived there; many of the best pilots on the river had homes on these wooded hills. You know the story. The Mormons are dreamers. No Indian dreams; if he does he never tells it!

‘But white people, men of Hancock County, wanted that city. They wanted for themselves the wealth acquired by the sobriety and toil of others; they wanted the farms, and the homes of the immigrant from whatever land. They appealed to the religious prejudice, and having murdered the Mormon leaders, brought cannon and took the town; plundered the stores, drove the owners — white people — across the Mississippi, without food, without shelter, without clothing, to face Iowa winter. They sickened, they starved, they froze, they perished in this “white man’s country”. Even yet they’re moving, trailing, they tell me, a remnant yet across mountain and desert, hundreds of miles, another nation on the march, walking, walking, gathering in thousands around a lake of salt, far, far from home!

‘When we parted before, I was angry. I hoped never to see you again, but for ten years, I have longed to see you to tell you all these things.

‘A mob, you say. What is a mob? A mob is a pack of cowards, out to kill some one man; where alone not one of them would dare touch him!

‘Adair? Adair was furious. He wanted me to start with him right away to help those people. My mother still lived and I could not go, but he took a friend or two and was off; found his way to Council Bluffs; has been there ever since, one of the men left in charge of a camp, a resting station to receive pilgrims and send them on their way. My mother died recently, and I came here. But now the last company of Mormon exiles passes; the camp is needed no more; Adair is free.

‘There’s the whistle! The ponies are ready: come on!’

Mr. Lyon had no chance to reply; he had to run to

keep up with his host already bringing out the ponies. When they reached the ferry everything was ready. On the opposite side of the river stood a lonely man waving impatient signals.

‘I drove on board’, said Mr. Lyon, ‘and in perfect silence off we went. I was at the prow in front of the horses. Facing me, at the stern, silent, the keen-eyed boatman stood. Upon his ponderous steering-oar the master leaned, holding a steady course diagonally across the water, using the river’s flood to crowd the boat toward the eastern shore; watching the while far up the stream lest floating log or tree destroy us. There were plenty of them. Our boat seemed standing still; the whole river the while seemed sliding fast beneath us, silent, waveless, spread in the sunlight fair and white, while to right, to left, far as one could see, unending forests shut us in, gray above but within dark and black as night. The ponies stood quiet; the pilot was silent; the machinist watched the engine and in the beauty of it all, I ceased to wonder how men learn to love the river. The river! Her shores are empires yet to be!

‘Before I knew we were over, the engines stopped. My friend the boatman stood beside me ready to drop the apron, soon scraping and grating on the sandy beach where we presently stood fast among the overshadowing trees.

‘Good-bye! Good-bye! I’ll not see you again. I have sold my boat to the machinist here and leave to-morrow morning, by way of the Missouri River, to join Adair. “Our inheritance is turned to strangers; our house to aliens. Our necks are under persecution; we labor and have no rest.” My path turns from yours; “the Indian must go.”’

‘The white man has the mines, the white man has the forests, the white man has the valleys — and yet for him grief and sorrow are not far. All the springs are angry; all the mountains gather blackness; and once the lightning burns and blazes, destruction shall in darkness strike! And the sun of morning find no thing that lives!’

‘He turned from me’, reported Mr. Lyon, ‘and I saw his face no more; nor shall I see it. Is the man crazy, or is he only human?’

‘I was so tired, so dazed by the experience of the twenty-four hours that I could barely recognize myself; was I still dreaming? I wished it, indeed I did. But as usual the ponies saved me; they at least were wide awake and sane; had run, I think, had they not been frightened at the trail obscure, plunging ahead under shadows dark, primeval!’

XVIII

THE DARKENING SHADOW

WHAT strange economy of the universe is this, that with all his pride of knowledge and accomplishment, civilized, yes, enlightened man still remains intimately allied with the beasts of the field! The animal serves man of course, and by man is served; yes — loved, chosen as companion! Sociology old and strange! Zoölogical psychology yields human sociology!

Around the earth precisely as in the days of farthest recorded story, in every land, in almost every clime, the shepherd still leads his flock and keeps by night perennial watch. Time does not weary him. Still, as in the centuries forgot, as in every century, his sheep at night lie down to sleep beneath his hand, at morn to follow where he pipes, to pastures new. Industry older than Abraham, than Eden's gates, the pyramids, or all the dwellers by the Ammon-guarded Nile; the industry of the sloping hills, does it not shine there in the unrecorded past, the first employment of meditative man! For William Blake the sunlight of dawn is on the fleecy backs of sheep, touching them with gold!

Who then invented such employ? What careful, peaceful being first gathered the lambs in his bosom and gently led the mothers of the flock? Wild sheep there still are, away up where the lingering snowfields meet the forest; where glaciers slip down to irrigate by perennial stream some hidden alpine meadow, there the wild sheep hide and graze, wary beyond the cunning of men. But the shepherded sheep, the sheep that know the fold, that

hear the shepherd's voice, these are in habit entirely by themselves; have long since shared the fortunes of humanity, have entered intimately man's destiny in the use and domination of all the world; so that now at last metaphor arrives, and we have learned to talk of the 'Great Shepherd of the Sheep', in other shining fields, by far other silent streams, gathering his own!

Mr. Lyon kept ponies, loved them, as has been seen; nor did he fail to tell, long after, all the details, how he and they toiled once upon an afternoon in spring, with buckboard, miles and miles across the Mississippi flats. The road, presently to be the highway for some at least of Iowa's arriving thousands, was then but a trail unused, difficult to find and hard to follow. Under gigantic trees, sycamores, maples, walnuts, elms, bound with vines that smothered limbs and branches, and burdened tops as if to obscure the sun, the way began. Now it emerged to compass curving lakes bordered by thickets of crab, in glorious bloom that day; again it crossed wide stretches of driven sand, only once more to enter dark overshadowing forest where rude bridges of slippery 'corduroy' placed in jeopardy from moment to moment the slender legs of ponies, sure-footed though they were.

It was ever the kindly thought of our horseman that ponies when driven, should not be urged; they should on the contrary be allowed to rest whenever they would. This theory, though liable on occasions to embarrassment for the driver, was never more religiously observed than now. The ponies often stopped, and hour after hour passed by, before the little creatures could finally climb the long slopes of Manyply hill to rest at last at the very summit.

Now the driver's patience found reward abundant.

While the ponies rested their master had time to look, to gaze upon the world! Before him lay a plain seemingly unbroken to the horizon's edge, high-lifted above that forest-hidden valley so recently traversed. Mr. Lyon could but bethink him of his dreams — 'just such a plain', he said. Not a mere *pré*, such as so named of Acadia and the Basin of Minas, but a *prairie* — richer word by far — a meadow that bloomed, 'prairial', green with the soft verdure of May, starred with the blossoms of June. As our traveler saw it, all the flowers that once from 'Dis's waggon' dropped, were shining still in the light of that afternoon!

Soon, with little heed on the driver's part, eastward the ponies covered mile after mile, as though day were but begun; while he, left to his own imaginings, went on 'dreaming', he said, building for the twentieth time the Iowa that was to be; when harvests should replace the flowers and be beautiful none the less. Houses, there were none; or half-hid at distant rim, lurking where meadow with forest met.

At length, as the trail turned suddenly to the south, straight before him, with background of far-stretching wooded valley, appeared a far-off house, taller than any he had seen. Illumined by the fast-descending sun this simple building took on a strange appearance of beauty. The lines were softened, the windows shone, the walls unpainted seemed tinged with silver; out of a vast meadow, against the horizon it rose alone, a column of smoke from tall, brick chimney. White, from wood-fire burning, from a fireplace, not from stove.

It was six by the watch, and in fancy's eye the driver saw a welcome cheer: a firelit room, a tidy housewife, biscuits browning before the fire, a spider with odorous

burden of tender meats frying above the coals, from crane-end, a great coffee boiler swinging, simmering, its fragrance—he could almost sense it as he sped along! ‘Very pleasant was my vision at that moment’, Mr. Lyon used to say, ‘I was tired! I must have dozed!’

Meantime the ponies had been steadily jogging on. As their driver dreamed, they, more practical, had seen that house, had started for it. All at once, they stopped!

The driver, roused, looked up to find himself and ponies face to face with just one far-spreading, streaming, bleating, herd of sheep! There was the house quite near, but all its evening glamor gone, the rusty walls, the unillumined panes, rising in naked ugliness above the tide. Sheep, thousands, they seemed, close-packed together, moving slowly toward a covered wagon far to the left. Mr. Lyon was astonished; he knew there were sheep in Illinois; was he not seeking them? But so many, so near the river, this he did not expect.

Before he was aware, he was quite surrounded. The ponies were nervous; he tried to turn and found himself confronted by the most bald, bareheaded, roundfaced, bearded man he had ever seen. Long legs, despite round, stooping shoulders, made him tall. Directly in front he stood, silent as if apparition risen from the ground. ‘Who are you?’ exclaimed our traveler, ‘who are you? Are these your sheep?’

‘Some of them are, and some of them are not, but none of them are yours, that’s certain; they don’t belong in Iowa and that’s where you come from.

‘Yes; they mostly belong to me, I suppose; but I keep ’em on four or five different farms. My sons run the business; they’re mighty good to clean up weeds. It’s shearing-time now, and we have got the sheep all to-

gether and have a sort of fambly-gathering by consequence.'

Whether in his remark about the weeds and the family, the landowner intended to compliment sons or sheep, or both, was not especially clear; at any rate, as far as eye could see, the prairie was now clean-cropped as a meadow mown.

'You are from Ioway; couldn't come from anywhere else on that trail. Those little ponies of your must be tired; they're like the "hireling" in the Bible, they "care not for the sheep"; ordinary horses would have made trouble before now; but I like sheep myself.'

Mr. Lyon said he hated to hear the man 'misprise the ponies' but he let him talk on. He had come for sheep; not for quarrel.

'Did Indian Trotter fetch you over? Mighty good boatman, if he is Indian. But he's some white, they say; nobody calls him Indian; no; he can read and write; was sort of teacher or agent down thar among those poor Cherokees that the army drove out; but he knows the river from Oquawka down anyway, Indian or no Indian. But Indians have got to go, I reckon.

'Oh yes, you can stay all night; never turn anybody away; we can eat you, if we can't sleep you; we're some crowded right now; hers, and mine, and ours, make out quite considerable fambly.

'Sleep near your ponies. The sheep's all got by now; drive down to right thar, find water, and I'll be over in a jiffy to show you what next!'

Following directions, Mr. Lyon found, as he passed the house, that it stood in a little court, and had a pleasant prospect over the unfurrowed prairie, which here broke down to the rear, in fields of tillage, green with

rising oats or gray with planted corn, reaching the wooded valley of some minor stream. However, he thought the case bad enough. He found the open well with bucket and chain, but no sign of a single thing which might promote the comfort of a civilized, not to say intelligent man; no grass, not a flower; no garden, not even a potato patch in sight! He was so tired and faint that he cared little to talk.

What then was his surprise a few minutes later, when the shepherd returned to hear him exclaim, 'I know you now; I didn't when I saw you first. How do you do, Mr. Lywen! My name's Herdman. I used to see you in Beardstown; knew your father in Kentuck', came from York State, he did; your mother, down east somewhere, same as my wife. You are Mark; Matthew died before your folks come down from Vandalia. Luke is at Beardstown, calls himself Lyon, getting well-off. Your sister, the youngest; is she still living? Your father wanted to call her John, but your mother said Olivia — wherever she got that name? It isn't Scripture. "What you will", she finally said, "call her Olivia John". I never forget that, first thing I heard about the fambly. Yes; yes; you know all about it; ponies look tired, like yourself; hard drive; all feel better in the morning; Mexican, Kansas stock?'

Our traveler made no reply. Ere he could say one word, the shepherd exclaimed: 'What to-day from Kansas?'

Nothing trivial now; but instead, with emphasis strange as if all else forgot, began a searching inquiry about affairs in Kansas; the latest news of Dr. Robinson, of Lane, of Reeder; about the 'border ruffians'; had they burned Lawrence yet?

'I'm a Democrat, a Douglas Democrat, but I do wish he had let the nigger question alone. His new squatter-sovereignty doctrine will make war in every new State; is making war in Kansas right now. Anyhow, I'm for fair play. I hate rowdies and border ruffians. I've sent one boy down there to fight 'em, and will send three or four more, if necessary. What do you think of Buchanan? They say he is sure to be the next president. Will he do? I'm a Democrat; but, if Fremont is nominated, we're all going to vote for him, as sure as you live, especially if Abe says so. Abe Lincoln was my captain in the Black Hawk War. I'm getting tired of this slave-hunting business anyhow, even if Henry Clay did vote for it, to save the country; looks to me like he made things worse.'

Awaiting no reply the shepherd conducted our traveller to the house, talking politics all the way. Mr. Lyon thought he knew the later history of the country, but this strange sheep-farmer knew it better. He talked right on, as he opened a gate and entered a tidy court, a wind-break of cedar on one side, a blossoming plum thicket on the other; a well, a wood-stack near the wide-open door reached by a flight of steps. 'Walk right in', he said.

As they entered they faced a second open door directly opposite; a ladder-like stair, of course, ascended to the floor above, but the whole house below was simply one great room. Everything that would go in, everything that might be useful on a farm, it seemed was in that room. Nevertheless, the guest was agreeably surprised. From the ceiled walls hung articles of every sort — hats and caps and coats for men, guns, rifles, the equipment for the hunter. At one end of the room a

long dining table before an open fireplace; at the other stood several beds which might be screened by curtains now drawn to either side. In this direction the walls, covered with sunbonnets, hats, and shawls, lent color to the scene. Here, too, a long table stretched across the room with not a few papers and books. *Harper's Monthly* lay open, revealing sketches of the Colonel, and the strife of Barnes and Clive! Every thing was clean! Evidently the housekeeping within the court was better than outside!

A number of young men and women along the dining-table faced the fire, all silent as the two men now came near.

The shepherd introduced his friend and then showed him a seat beside himself, just opposite his wife. 'The woman was pleasant-spoken', said Mr. Lyon, 'was sorry they were crowded, and could not give me place in the house.'

The young folk, as they finished eating, left the room. Then the lady came and sat down near her husband and asked about Iowa.

'What a stream of people last fall went through here for Iowa! From Springfield, I heard. I have two boys who did want to go to Iowa, but they have the Kansas fever now. I have one boy down there — I wish he were home! I worry about him all day long, and all night I dream of houses burning, and women and children fleeing across the plain. I do not want to hear of Kansas!

'I wish that boy was here this very minute; I do! I'd rather have the boys all in Iowa, and the sheep, too, than one in Kansas.

'We're very quiet, as you see, we are quite off the road; this is our summer camp. We seldom see stran-

gers; but an old man and a daughter, on the way to Iowa, spent the night here only a week ago. Samedi, the name I think. I wish that boy would come in right now!’

Having already some inkling of the husband’s opinions, Mr. Lyon was surprised and not a little disconcerted, by the outspoken sentiment of his hostess, even though what was said anticipated almost precisely his own plans and intended proposals. He hesitated, and was about to reply when his host saved the situation by taking the cue himself.

Very quietly he admitted that affairs in Kansas were bad; but he thought the boy was rightly there. He thought the trouble in Kansas was ‘some like a prairie-fire, all hands can put it out at the start; but if you wait till the wind gets hold, nobody knows where it does stop. That’s why I’m for doing somethin’ quick! But there’ll be no boys go from here now till after ’lection; not now, unless they burn Lawrence; then I can’t promise.’

This, Mr. Lyon thought, opened the door for him. He suggested Iowa for raising sheep. ‘I offer homes to men who have sheep. Iowa is the land of promise’, said our friend.

‘Not now, not now’, said the shepherd, ‘not now; a land of promises you mean! Iowa has a crowd of people from last year. They are too many at once. Let me tell you, friend, it is a poor time to start a new job when prices are going down and everybody is in debt. Most things are uncertain. Sheep are sheep; they don’t cost nothin’; they just grow; sheep *are*; you can count ’em and know what you’ve got; but Ioway promises are nothing. I know it, for I’ve tried ’em. When you come to count things promised in Ioway they are not! Come

out and see some of our boys; then you can talk for yourself; the boys may go, after 'lection, maybe—it depends; but no sheep to Ioway without the gold. Not on promises, I'll tell you right now!

There was nothing else to be done. The shepherd was already disappearing. Our astonished traveler had scarce time to thank his hostess, to express the hope that he might yet have pleasure to greet some of her sons in Iowa, even one returned from Kansas—when he heard from beyond the door the peremptory call, 'Come on! Come on!' and he obeyed.

The exit now by the western side reversed our traveler's recent landscape with a scene of beauty such as only the sinking sun can spread across far-stretching prairie. The air was clear with just enough clouds and mist above the distant river to build one of those rare sunsets of early summer when golden islands float and stretch on purple seas. Mr. Lyon said he had never noticed quite such light; it seemed to flood the ground like some wide, over-spreading stream, until every rising twig or blade of grass could cast a shadow, a line of black that lengthened, widened. The shearers' wagon stood somewhat removed; all beneath it went the flood of rays from side to side, pouring between the spokes; dimming the campfire on the other side where late the shepherds' evening meal had scorched and smoked, but brightening for a moment their own dull, dusky raiment as they sat upon the ground, and lighting with strange metallic sheen the wolfish hair of dogs that lay silent beside them, with splendor still to spare to reach all the scattered kettles, pots, and pans, the grimy utensils of the camp, and touch each rim with gold!

Involuntarily, Mr. Lyon, now overtaking his com-

panion, stopped to look. The shepherd noticed it, and exclaimed, 'good shearing weather; this is a fine country; beats old Kentuck' already. Both my women always did like the look of the country east; you can see most of the whole Spoon valley. The Indians liked it, too, I'm told; but they're all done for now, I think.'

Out of the house, the host was not quite himself; 'a little uncertain of my reception at the camp, perhaps', our friend reported. 'The wagon stood near a fine, double-cabin; lilacs bloomed in the dooryard; apple, wild plum, peach in full blossom in a large garden behind the house; in the softened afterglow we stood admiring.'

'This is my old home; my oldest son lives here; the younger boys want to go to Ioway, but I think they are just as well this side of the river. What do you say?'

'What do I say? What I have said before. I want some of those boys with a flock of sheep as soon as they care to come; I'll take care of them!' And Mr. Lyon went on to explain his plans and purposes.

Finally his host exclaimed again: 'No sir; no sir; not now; not till times are better; no bargain, not a boy, not one sheep!'

As they lingered talking, the sun dropped below the level horizon line as if into the sea; the shadows suddenly disappeared, the campfire light began again to shine, everything perfectly still. Only the most attentive ear might catch from the sheepfold, still farther on, the sound of contented murmur; the sheep were all in fold, where in rude shelter the nightwatch already had his place, doubtless surrounded by another escort of silent dogs.

'We moved and stood before the fire. A dozen men

stood up to greet us; came forward to shake hands; more than half, no doubt, sons of the complex family.'

They listened while their guest talked Iowa, its beauty, its certain future wealth and greatness, until one replied: 'Make it Kansas and we'll all go; Iowa joins Kansas, an open door at Tabor. From river to river the Mormons have opened a road. Make it Kansas and we'll go!'

They all shouted approval, especially when another, a tall beardless lad, spoke up, 'Dad was a soldier in the Black Hawk War. We're going to take our turn and see what's in Kansas. I'd shoot an Indian on sight! The Indians are gone; but maybe a shot at a border ruffian would do just as well!'

'Ah you!' said another, 'you wouldn't shoot a rabbit; you can beat any ram in the herd at a foot-race; proved it yesterday.'

The others laughed, of course, but not the father. 'He's the best shot among you. He's sure; and what's more, Mark Lyon, the very biggest and finest timber-wolf-hide we have belongs to Ben. It's down at the house now. But if those people in Kansas keep on playin' Indian, burning farmhouses and killing the folks, I think thar's a call for some old-fashioned, straight shooting, now I tell you!'

'When they's a neighbor-fight', said an old shearer, 'the sheriff, if he's any account, can stop it. The United States will have to stop that Kansas row and I reckon they'll do it a good while before next 'lection, too. Back-firin' won't help any more; the thing's gone too far; but if it isn't stopped pretty soon, Herdman here is going to have wool to give away.'

'What you talking about?' said another shearer.

‘Don’t you know war helps the wool market — did year afore last, when those Russians and English got at it! War is good for business! I’m for war, I am!’

‘May depend on where the war is’, suggested Mr. Lyon.

‘And if you let Kansas go on another year, you won’t have a great ways to go, in my opinion, to find out just whar the war is! I’m for stoppin’ it right now’, said Herdman.

‘Wait till after shearin’, Dad, and we’ll all go down and see it through; wait till after shearin’; you can be captain! you can be captain!’ shouted the younger men, and the whole company scattered for the night.

‘I gave it up’, said Mr. Lyon, ‘war may be good for business, but there’s surely no business when there’s only talk of war! One of my plans was ended.

‘Near the ponies I fell asleep. Wakened at dawn by the breakfast call, I met again my new-found friends above a perfectly cheerless breakfast fire. The smoke hung low and heavy about our heads; they greeted me, only then to fall silent; of Iowa, of Kansas, not one word! I missed my host; but for some reason felt inclined to ask no questions. The shearers scattered in the smoke and fog, leaving me to care for myself and ponies as best I might.’

XIX

THE INNER LIGHT

A SUMMER mist lay on the world that morning very much to the confusion of men, whether travelers or would-be shearers-of-sheep. One of those gentle radiation fogs it was, left over from the forming dews of night.

Warm, veil-like it lingered. No doubt it concealed the while the bursting buds of summer flowers; screened perhaps the much embarrassed, twisting, straining, struggling grass-blades, and all impatient circinate leaves. It draped, as Mr. Lyon noted, the very sun in his rising and left his Majesty a mere huge scarlet patch hanging round and low on the edge of morning. A beautiful fog, indeed, thought our traveler, but how very inconvenient! How ever shall I find my way? Amid a hundred spreading paths, how shall I guess which one is mine?

Moreover, somewhat to his surprise as he went forth, his host did not appear; but as he passed the house an elder son came up doubtless sent to do the honors of the moment, and to set a guest rightly on the way.

‘You know the general direction—keep the red sun behind you for about half-an-hour or so, then if you have not found under your wheels, the ruts of a worn trail across your way, turn sharply to left anyway, bearing east a little for Twickenham Point.

‘By this time the fog will lift I think, and then you can’t miss the only trail. Dad says, “Tell him not to make a bet, nor go in debt, leastways till after election.” Good-bye!’

The fog was of the softest and also of the whitest, lightest. It hung before the ponies and checked their usual speed. But by the end of the half-hour it did indeed begin to lift, to become a thing of shreds and patches as if the sun might immediately appear. But just as the driver thought to increase his speed, the ponies stopped, lifted their ears with every sign of surprise and began suddenly to back away. A tall human figure just before them dimly emerged from the cloud!

'Why Herdman! Herdman!! You always take us un-awares. Did you come up out of the ground, or down with the fog?'

The driver was apparently quite as much astonished as his horses. He had heard of men driving in a circle; did that explain it? Had the ponies swung back to the shearer's camp? But the shepherd quietly replied: 'I thought maybe I'd meet up with you; I was but a little north and came to the noise of wheels. Ponies a little bit nervous this morning; don't blame 'em, little uneasy myself; youngest boy kind of run off; gone hunting. Took his rifle before sun-up and left camp. Very excited about the war in Kansas; wants to shoot somebody — Indians anyhow.

'He's heard that the only good Indian is a dead one; apparently is out for war. I'm a little afraid he'll start trouble. May, if he finds nobody else, take a clip at the ferryman after awhile. He is making for the river, we think; not more'n a mile or so ahead, perhaps; could see him if it wasn't so foggy.'

Mr. Lyon shuddered. 'Jump! jump up quick! I'll drive you! Quick! Quick! Jump!

'No; no; keep your shirt on! Don't get excited. Here's your road; keep to the left; and here's mine!

I'll get him — and before the driver could recover his senses the man was gone; lost from sight in the fog-cloud just for the moment denser than ever.

Mr. Lyon for the moment was lost as well; not that the ponies would not follow the trail, but lost in astonishment and uncertainty.

He stood up, called, and called again; but there came no answering reply; the calling seemed but to alarm the horses. Unused to such shouts, they took the bit, sprang forward, throwing their master to the ground. He succeeded, however, in finding his feet and regained control, but not the trail! 'The ponies were very human', he said, 'like frightened children. I had to go to their heads, talk to them, coax them, pet them, get their eyes, and so their attention; they kept watching the fog; doubtless hearing footsteps there, whence I heard none at all.'

After a while when the fog did lift and the driver had regained the road, and was once more on his way, he was not happy — far from that. The situation still distressed him.

He tried to comfort himself; the lad was simply 'gone-a-hunting'. Anyhow, the ferryman was by this time off the river; probably even far on his way to find his son in the west. But that way lay Tabor! He could not free his mind. What a world! The pathetic tale of Cherry; the horrors of Bad Axe, Kansas, and now this boy!

The sun was well up and shining; the sensible ponies were quiet, had taken their gait and were rattling steadily southward, when their worried driver finally thought it worth while to lift his head and look about.

The sky was clear; the fog almost entirely gone. Only

at intervals whiffs of whiteness, caught in the tree-tops of the forest, here and there came to view away to the east, as if to keep him company; 'ravine-heads', he said to himself. But west and south lay prairie only; brilliant green; tinted, perfumed with opening flowers; musical with bobolinks and meadow-larks, or the rush of quails rising in numbers, disturbed by the passing wheels. Not a vehicle in sight, nor even a man on horse-back; distant herds of cattle scarcely moving, grazing in quiet.

Impressed with the vision, holding tight rein he stopped, thinking for a moment to look behind, to get his 'bearings', as he said; to see if the Herdman house were yet in view? The fog lingered to the north, clinging to the valley of the Spoon no doubt; but — just as he was about to release the lines, a moving object caught his eye! Moving? Yes, hasting for the nearest point of woodland as if to escape detection, a man! Indeed, yes! A man, tall, slender, upon his shoulder something long and straight gleaming and flickering in the morning light.

'There he is! There he is! That's the boy! Sure as fate that's he! It's that boy with his gun! Oh! I'm so relieved! he's not gone west; he's not gone west!' cried Mr. Lyon.

Warned by recent experience the driver stood now up for better view; but in a moment, as he looked, down the wooded slope the striding figure disappeared, the shining rifle last. 'Oh, I'm so relieved! He's not gone west! He's not gone west!'

Somehow his excitement was communicated to the ponies; again they started as if to run away. Was it his tone, his changed tension on the lines, his exclama-

tions, was it all these combined, that to their still excited nerves brought terror? At any rate, a second glimpse was directly impossible. The horses claimed immediate, strict attention, and by the time they had once more come to quiet, new landscapes opened, far down his way.

Our traveler felt relieved. Out of sight shall be out of mind. At any rate with the disappearance of that lone figure and his shouldered weapon, we shall drop the shepherd and all his ways from thought, as if to final oblivion. Yesterday is passed; every shred of unwelcome interest shut now behind the opening gates of a new and more prosperous day. Why not? Why not?

For some time horses and master moved on in quiet, but the master still was troubled; the gates of day stood open but the doors of night refused to close! He was impatient with Herdman; not so much that he refused assistance called for, that was disappointment of course, 'but the man had a right to his own judgment in the case', he said; but he accused his father's friend of folly! He had dismissed a business proposal for fear of war, and yet was he not personally in his own family and to the extent of his influence doing just the things that surely make for war, and so make the development of a country long impossible. War might help the wool-market; but, as the shepherd himself averred, it would check and embarrass Iowa. Mr. Lyon was not only disappointed, he was vexed, entirely out of patience.

But, as is usually true of the impatient man, our friend was impatient with himself. Is not wrath a matter of the sympathetic system? He reflected; he realized that for the first time in his life he had taken the part of an Indian! He had indeed! He wanted the father to overtake and arrest that son, not for the father's

sake, nor for the lad's sake, nor to save an Indian — not for any defined reason, but simply as a prompt revolt or revulsion against a situation, as he would dodge a blow, or stop at a precipice's edge.

At the moment, he reflected as he now moved along, at the moment, the voice of reason sounded not at all! Reason had said: 'the boy should have been otherwise brought up; he should have learned ere this not to go hunting at shearing-time; his old father should not be compelled to leave his work to hunt a runaway boy, off to shoot dangerous animals, Indians.' After the first surprise reason might have suggested many things. He even recalled a notable injunction of his father's, 'If you think you see a wolf take aim; if an Indian, *shoot first!*' And yet, recovering from the moment of surprised astonishment, now he saw himself as ready, an hour ago, without reason, to rush off through the fog to help save a man from possible trouble; and that man *red-skinned!*

Alas! how does youthful training in a moment vanish in the light of fact! Or in the lack of it! The fancies of childhood, fairies, angels, saints, terrestrial and celestial, never trouble much the man who thinks!

In this world fact alone can have authority. Pre-sumption, much more assumption, imposture of all sorts, is at length despised, smilingly perhaps, but forever!

About this feature of present experience, our traveler was strangely but seriously embarrassed; he did not know whether to be impatient or not. He had acted upon some push or feeling ill-defined, but contrary to all his early training and oft-proclaimed convictions; yet was he at the moment terribly in earnest, and later thoroughly glad that what he sought was probably realized.

He thought about the matter all day; beside the

spring, beneath the walnut trees where at noon he fed his horses, nor less in the afternoon when, a little more slowly his faithful ponies carried him on and on across the unfurrowed prairies. Other occasions in life's experience began to rise when, what he somehow 'felt', as he said, 'in his bones' won the day as against reason, against the urging of other people, and even against his own preference betimes; and yet the decision turned out invariably good, he recalled, in the sense of sane and wise!

At the time it never occurred to him at all that during the last twenty-four hours he had all unconsciously been brought face to face with fact, fact old indeed, though to him new, the simple humanity of man!

When once about such matters he talked with his friend, Squire Marks, the Squire said: 'inner light; the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' But, as usual, the Squire was thinking no doubt of things religious!

Nevertheless the suggestion lingered. And now our traveler tried to make it helpful. 'Light', he said to himself, 'is universal, shines on everything it can reach and is useful according as we give attention. If this inner light is, as said, the true light of every man, every man must have it to some extent; it is not reasoned, something taught; it is natural, instinctive, it is judgment, common sense! For George Fox, the "inner light" turned upon the religious problems about him, became a veritable illumination; made him a prophet, he thought; and indeed helped him to do his part in overturning established religion with its millinery and machinery; did he not give us such men as William Penn, Gouverneur Morris, and — Squire Marks!

‘The same light, when turned upon question of conduct, reveals’, thought Mr. Lyon, ‘distinction of right and wrong; conscience we say. Father Blew read last Sunday about a “still small voice”; is that it? Is it, indeed, the voice of God?’

‘But is it not the same light which has worried me in other affairs so often? I believe it is! I wonder. It feels the same; is it all a matter of feeling? It is as forceful as conscience; can be ignored; rather, can be overcome, by reason which dwells upon conditions, brings to the light new facts, and thus perhaps reverses a prior judgment.’

Such were some of the thoughts that occupied the mind of an Iowa farmer, perplexed on a summer day in the open field. The outer light was so splendid all about him, he could not be frightened, or discouraged. He was all alone, indeed, but he had some light within; he rejoiced. In his thoughts, he was ‘extremely happy’, he said; his troubles disappeared in the keen interest of research! Like La Place with Newton’s theory, he dared to think that he had made the Friend’s discovery had George Fox never lived!

At the same hour, perchance, across the seas bold James McCosh was busy teaching young men of Belfast the mysterious doctrine of intuition! Was this telepathy; or was the light perhaps not just quite the same?

Our traveler often said that this one day in spring by no means the longest day of the year was yet the longest in his life. Usually on a journey one’s business occupies his mind, but to-day, lack of business drove business dreams away. Nature with the warming sun lay all about, around him, her splendid equilibrium by civilization still unbroken. The chorus of ten thousand

early songsters nor less in the sunshine the humming of life's unnoted wealth, the sound of swarming myriads, filled with music the measureless depths, above, around!

Mr. Lyon loved nature, but this morning saw it, heard it not. Even the soft patter of his ponies' feet, sound beloved, passed mile after mile unnoted. He said he thought of everything he ever knew, but especially how it could ever be possible that he should for one moment care what became of an Indian! But — *he did!*

The Illinois River lay now before him; he was following the alluvial terraces of its northern bank; and when, as the sunlight began to tinge the silent waters once more he found himself upon a creeping ferry he was content; a long, long day had given him time to think. A half-hour later, as he sat at his brother's table, saw Mr. McQ and heard all that his brother had to say of river and plain, of merchandise and mart, of war and peace, of slavery, Buchanan, Kansas, and the rest, reason indeed took fright; fear stood in the way, making all desire to fail; but the still, small voice from the throne of the 'inner light' said, patience! patience! patience! wait!

XX

THE PRINCE OF ABYSSINIA

Two men set out from Beardstown for the North. They are driving, and the taller holds the reins. The week is ending. They are late; but haste and drive as they may, Saturday noon finds them no farther than the little county seat town, and — it begins to rain!

With ponies and the open buckboard, nothing now but wait for clearing skies. The younger man, after dining, may visit the courthouse. There is a 'murder case', he hears; but his employer finds just now a murder case less interesting. Disappointed with shepherds, not quite certain of his new companion, belated, worried, he dreaded the future; even 'inner light' thoughts were quite unavailing now. What was it that the ferryman had said? 'High-water, flood, June rise!' He feared the river. Could he cross it?

In his perplexity he stepped outside, stood idly under the wooden portico of the hotel to watch the slanting rain, quite dissatisfied with all the world, himself included; when suddenly someone slapped his shoulder.

Startled he whirled about to find himself face to face with — Herdman! The warrior shepherd! None but he; of all things, stooped and lank as ever, clad in a woolly sheepskin coat, and bareheaded still, shuffling along the muddy streets of the prairie capital. He looked a sheep on stilts; and the rain came in torrents.

'Great Heavens! Herdman! in the name of common sense what in the world are you doing here on a day like this?'

'Youngest boy shot a man the other evening down in the brush; took him for Injun I reckon; says so. Long shot; wonder he hit him; shoulder; scratch only; Doc, of course, says he may die, and I had to come to town by consequence.'

Mr. Lyon turned very pale. Alas! Was this the echo of the Black Hawk War?

'Bad enough, bad enough! yes, yes; such weather; spring-showers, can't shear; bright to-morrow; come back and stay with me; we'll talk Ioway. "June rise", yes, yes; yesterday; too early; no ferryboat for a month, they say; wool to Chicago; yes, yes; don't wonder you look pale; come back to camp!'

For a moment our friend could find no words. He was again astounded. His answer when he did speak was brevity itself, 'Fort Madison once it quits raining'; and through the mud the warrior shepherd plodded on and disappeared!

Grieved, intellectually bewildered, our farmer turned and passed abruptly into the house. 'This then is the murder case!'

He found his landlord kneeling on the flagging before a grimy fireplace, kindling a wood-fire.

'Quite a shower', he said, 'men'll be coming in drip-pin'-wet pretty soon; a little fire'll seem good. Take off your hat. Sit down and enjoy the blaze. Fire in the right place seems encouragin' any time, most any time of year. This chimney, like our Presbyterian preacher, draws first rate once it gets started!'

His guest removed his hat but did not sit down. Instead, surprised at the clean, smooth-polished, hard, oak floor, before unnoticed, he strode slowly around the spacious barroom, noting the abundant decorations on

the white-washed walls. Andrew Jackson behind the cotton-bales at New Orleans; General Harrison at Tippecanoe; the death of Tecumseh at the hand of Colonel Johnson — on this he gazed with horror — General Scott storming the heights of Chapultepec; General Fremont entering Monterey — warriors all, in uniform and mounted, the glory of our American wars!

‘Come into the sitting room’, said his host, ‘if you won’t sit down, you may like this other room; bad news probably; some curios here.’ He opened a door near the now blazing chimney, and Mr. Lyon stepped on carpeted floor; a room smaller, but with a fireplace. Above the mantle were crossed swords and guns of every description pendent from deer antlers fastened in the wall. Almost to the ceiling they rose. ‘Every piece with a history’, said the host. Mr. Lyon turned to a piece of clear mahogany at the opposite end of the apartment, a bureau surmounted by a bookcase. ‘Fine! where did you find it?’

‘In St. Louis, good while ago; good for specimens’, and as the landlord spoke he pointed to arrowpoints, tomahawks of every sort, spears. ‘Savage, those fellows were, but mighty good workmen, some of them, too; I used to make steel axes in England myself; but these fellows have got the curve! Look at the bottom-side of these axes; just right! just right! How did the Indian come to do that? Axe comes down in a curve — see — when you chop.’

The guest looked, but if he understood, said nothing; other thoughts still thronging his mind. The discouraged host turned to go out just as the traveler’s eye fell on some dull-looking, old, leather-bound books, on the uppermost shelf. ‘Old stuff, left here by a man

taken ill; couldn't pay; help yourself if you like them.'

Mr. Lyon rather idly selected and blew the dust from a small quarto, the title on the back no longer legible; but on opening to the title page he read '*Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia*, by Samuel Johnson, Vol. I!' Not just quite certain what or where Abyssinia might be, impelled by unconscious curiosity, he turned to the opening page.

The first sentence of the first chapter struck him instantly; he read it with delight: "Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope" — 'I'm the very fellow every day in the year', he exclaimed, and continued to read: "who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow" — 'I don't know about that; I haven't got that far; but let's see; I'll just "attend to the history of Rasselas the Prince of Abyssinia, —"' and he dropped into a hickory-bottom chair to read.

"The Father of Waters begins his course" — What! that's pretty close home! — "where bounty pours down the streams of plenty" — Yes, yes — "and scatters over half the world the harvests of Egypt!" What!!

'Well; well! — may be good history, but geography's a good deal mixed.' He read on — 'Oh, yes; I see! might have known — Abyssinia; it is down there around the Holy Land somewhere; he calls the Nile "The Father of Waters"; did anybody ever hear impudence like that! Come to think of it, I have heard that an Englishman — or was he Welsh — set up an English colony in Illinois long ago, and some of those folk named the port of Illinois, Cairo! The Yankee always improves, a little bit, I suppose, on the Englishman; so, we call the whole

country down there Egypt, because it is so flat. "Egypt is the gift of the Nile" — we're even!"

But from sentence to sentence the delighted reader went on; the happy valley somehow charmed him; something so unheard of; new, and yet so real. He read it all the second time before the melancholy fact impressed him that, except the prince royal, those entering this place of beauty never went out; then, he said, the whole valley seemed to him like a beautiful porch he had somewhere seen built over a gate opening on a cemetery!

But he was charmed just the same. This was perhaps the first piece of artistic literature he had ever read for himself; he read slowly, stopping on almost every page at something, as if uncertain, so that he probably read almost every chapter twice over in what was to him an entirely novel, excited interest.

'What the prince needed was liberty', he said, 'when he thought in the miseries of men to find a missing element of joy. But he sought escape; when he didn't know what he wanted he was crying for freedom; but when he got it he didn't know it, and so was as discontented as before, as are most people who *try* to be happy.'

But the reading that rainy afternoon went right on; chapter after chapter suggested, or discussed the common experiences of men. He discovered that no man can be a poet; but that few things are impossible to diligence and skill; that he that has much to do, will do something wrong; and whether perfect goodness will ever give perfect happiness will never in this world be decided. He learned, or at least discovered, apothegms by the score, and in the marvelous range of the strange story was just ready to dive with the prince into the

depths of the Great Pyramid when in stepped McQ fresh from his 'murder case', and, as after appeared, from a survey of the town as well.

'How fine', he exclaimed, as he stood on the clean-washed floor before the still glowing fire, 'how fine; looks like old England; haven't seen the like in this country. We're lucky after all, aren't we?' as through the open door he noticed his employer, 'it's going to clear; I missed you.'

Our friend looked up from his book. 'Have you read this? Wonderful story! I have just finished the first volume; take it, you, and sit down till supper time; we'll talk later'.

McQ admitted he had read about the book, but had never seen it. He sat down and two men were quiet for the rest of the day!

Even at supper, they said little. McQ ventured to remark: 'There was no murder trial, for the good reason there was nobody murdered.' He was immediately interrupted by the question, 'What do you think of that fellow that knocks the poets clear out of business? My wife wouldn't like that; a man couldn't get wisdom like that, if Solomon had a vendue! And how about the hermit who shuts himself up in a cave, on the theory of dodging all appearances of evil, and finds he had at any rate dodged also all the consolations of good? What do you think of living according to nature?

'That fellow pleased me immensely till he wound up with a definition of Nature, a sentence nobody could understand; a good deal like the man we heard last summer, talking at our schoolhouse. He said the reason why religion was successful in this world was because of "inherent qualities as related to exherent difficulties."

I suppose that's so; but when it comes to telling a man to find happiness by living according to nature, his own nature must be counted. All right, if he were a good-natured man, I suppose; but if bad-natured all the time; then what? He would be in trouble with everybody else; or if, as most of us, he were good-natured most of the time, he could not be happy, since he would be at war with himself for not being good-natured all the time!

All evening long for two men at least with two volumes, the Prince of Abyssinia had the floor; and when it came time to separate for the night it was to accept the rather sad conclusion that it is indeed doubtful whether any general rule for happy living can be found, since we are compelled to take life as it is; but they also agreed that in the sentence, 'Human life is a state where much is to be endured, little to be enjoyed', the nouns of quantity are subject to shift; even changing places to meet the judgment of one's own experience. 'Most men love life', thought the younger man, 'few throw it willingly away.'

Our travelers were optimists as by the very ordering of nature all men are. Does it not stand written: 'The evening was, and the morning was, day one?' Surely if the day ends with the sinking sun, its follower as of old begins in darkness. According to Tacitus, the ancestors of many good Americans reckoned nights instead of days. We, degenerate sons, have almost forgotten the habit—not quite; sennight lingers on the verge of usage, and without fortnight, journalistic nomenclature were poor indeed. But whether forgot or not, such logic primitive, the curious fact remains that round the world each day humanity, careless of all blackness,

plunges into night, nay into the deeper darkness of absolute unconsciousness, certain that all these sable ir-rememberable hours are but the ushers-in of dawn and day, until at last night is forgotten and our years are made of days! We are optimists!

But, however all this may be, for our late-won pupils of the sage of Lichfield, a starry night well spent in sleep did usher in a morn of splendor such as only the vernal skies that overhung the primitive prairie might well display.

The showers which once appeared disastrous had washed and clarified the very sky, leaving to limpid purity the blue of far, unfathomed depths, 'the firmament' bending its circles above the earth's now far-spread robe of green all unmarred by human touch — since yesterday only — starred with myriad flowers!

Once the narrow valley of Crooked Creek was passed, the road came out on open plain; the forest receded; the light morning wind stirred to long shadows of changing color the springing grass; the prospect was magnificent!

'Never did I see the like of this', said McQ, 'and were it not for man, it were easy to believe that the Creator meant the earth to be beautiful, and that life and joy should win in all the world! There should be nothing "simply to be endured"!'

Just then a hawk dropped sudden, swift from low and lazy flight above the plain, and in another instant, rose heavily, carrying in its talons some squeaking, struggling rodent, right before the travelers' eyes, toward the bare top of a nearby tree.

'What do you think of that?' said Mr. Lyon.

'Well yes; I spoke too soon', replied McQ, 'of course

only man can know or feel injustice! The ponies don't mind a little thing like that.'

No; the ponies did not mind; they too were glad; only a little loath, perhaps, to be confined to the two parallel paths that stood for highway here. Were they not rested, unusually bright this morning; their new velvet coats of mouse and drab, clean and shining, from ear to fetlock; the harness new and touched with silver mountings; had not their driver, this morning for very distinction's sake, tied outside each soft-bitted, unblinded bridle a knot of flaming tape? Did they not deserve it on such a day? on such a field? No; the ponies did not mind; but their owner did! Let lovers of horses speak!

Yes; the ponies sped along, far above most of the sources of the 'western fork', without touch of whip, or scarcely guiding hand, mile after mile that day, the while their owner entertained his guest by stories of the years he knew, the great American Bottom, opposite St. Louis; of General Howard and his nine hundred men marching to Fort Clark, whose persisting trail even now they traced; or where unfollowed, might still be seen where parallel lines of greener, taller-rising grass of spring marked yet the army wagon's track; time simply was not to men outdoors that day!

Later on the travelers caught glimpses of the river lying white, yonder far in the distance like a slender, lengthened lake girt in by forest. As they stopped to look, the silence was profound. The prairie hens had ceased their clucking; warblers, sparrows, cat-birds, all were silent; there were flowers indeed, but even the insects were still, nor bumble-bee, nor beetle had yet started on his flight. As McQ put it long after, for him 'the whole world smiled'; for hours there was not a single

human habitation to be seen, save now and then some cabin, far on the forest-border. The natural world was his, all his; should he not rejoice?

He told his companion how good it seemed to come to 'Illinois where all was beauty, peace.' But Mr. Lyon mentioned Bad Axe River, Alton, and Nauvoo. 'Remember the hawk and the ground-squirrel', he replied, 'despite all the beauty of this new world, men are barbarians still, and the mark of Cain is here as at the very gates of paradise. 'But—you never told me of the murder trial', he finally exclaimed; 'how was it?'

'Well, as I was about to say at supper', said McQ, 'a foolish, and over-grown, gawky, shepherd lad—Oh yes; I saw him!—went hunting on a neighbor's land. The neighbor heard shooting; went to see about it, trailing through his own forest, as red men are supposed to do. The excited boy, following the instructions of his own father, took a long shot at the trailer. Might have been worse; but the injury was fortunately very slight; and as turned out, all parties were good friends; the lad's father and the victim had been fellow-soldiers in the Indian wars.

'The father took all the blame; said his father had told him that when he saw a wolf he should "take aim and shoot; did he see an Indian he should shoot first!" He had told his son that, and the boy took no chances.

'He made a mistake, for he saw no Indian. "I am very sorry", he said, "I will take care of my neighbor, pay all damages, and give bond for Jack here that he will keep the peace."

'Everybody seemed satisfied with this; the injured man, sitting beside the boy, said he "knew how it was"; he had that feeling himself about Indians once; felt

different about it now; but he wanted to withdraw all complaint. "Jack and I can settle it", he said.

"But he couldn't settle it", said Mr. Lyon, "to shoot at a man is an offense against the public peace."

"That's just what the judge said. He said, 'I'll enter 'damages settled out of court, case under bond'; but the matter may be brought up again by the grand jury; we have established institutions in this country now, and this matter, in that view, is still open."

"The crowd ran for their dripping horses tied to posts all up and down the streets; a piece of sheepskin, thrown on for saddle; away they rode and ran! Grown up boys they were; established institutions not perceptibly for them!

"But the judge was dignity itself. He is an old man, with stock, white collar, and shaven face; he lacked but the wig to sit in any court in England!"

"Disputes are often settled out of court", said Mr. Lyon, "ought to be; courts are a necessary luxury, a concession to human stupidity, ignorance, stubbornness, and pride; part of the "much that must be endured." But — it's afternoon! We must feed the ponies!"

Mr. Lyon had evidently been talking with his eyes open, for, as he mentioned the ponies, McQ looked up from things of paradise to see not far away a well-placed farmhouse, better than most, the window-casings painted white, and a small white portico hung across the front. As they watched, the owner apparently went leisurely leading a team of horses to a well, leaving a two-seated wagon from which a family had just descended.

"Just home from church; there's our chance", said Mr. Lyon.

As he drove toward the gate, the owner called out: 'Turn in! Turn in! It's an all-fired long road from here to nowhere; but turn in anyhow and tell us how you got here!'

XXI

A SELF SUPPORTING INSTITUTION : LIMITED

MR. LYON was equal to the occasion. He drove up to the well, remarking that a man who did not expect to see travelers should not build his house on the only trail across the prairie from nowhere to Madison ferry.

'You for the ferry? Well, then you may as well put up. There's no house 'twixt here and the river, and no ferry Sundays. We'll try to take care of you though, leastways, unless you want to go back the way you came. Anyhow we'll have dinner and talk to the Missus.'

McQ's face fell. Mr. Lyon said nothing.

'Come right along; we'll shake hands when I get these horses under cover; amongst us we've left the gate open and I dasn't start them off by themselves.'

At this McQ ran back to fasten the gate. Mr. Lyon turned to water the impatient ponies; but before that important ceremony was finished, his host was again beside him with extended hand. 'How-dy! My name's Peet; I'm one of six boys my father had, every one of 'em self-supporting institutions. What's this little man's name? Looks like an Irishman, though there's not many around here.'

Mr. Lyon gave his name and presented McQ, with the remark, 'He's from Wales.'

'He is rather small for an Irishman, but the name gives him away. The Welsh are surely a fine people. I knew some once at Shawneetown; but what they've got in their mouth when they talk to one another there's not many could tell. Those are lively nags you're driv-

ing. I don't like spots on a horse myself, don't like a horse with blue eyes, though they're no blemish. Put 'em right there. They're so little they fit in 'most anywhere. I suppose you feed 'em on nubbins?'

McQ watched Mr. Lyon. Evidently he was not exactly pleased; but, as McQ thought and said afterwards, they both wanted some dinner and wished the ponies fed; so they could not afford a quarrel just yet. Mr. Lyon, however, replied: 'Sometimes nubbins, in Missouri where they can't raise corn; sometimes oats.'

'All right!' cried the jovial Peet, 'you are dead right! This is not Missouri, oats they shall have; four quarts apiece, eh?'

'No; three will be plenty; we shall probably not drive this afternoon, by your kindness.'

'No indeed you'll not drive this afternoon, unless you're bound to. Mr. McQ can come with me and get oats and I'll get wild hay, then we'll look after what the preacher calls the "inner man"; my wife in the present administration is secretary of the interior!'

As the men turned to the house what did they find on the gate, hard by the well, but a big crash towel, with bench and basin just inside the yard. Mr. Lyon had seen the like; he was pleased; McQ was puzzled.

Mrs. Peet received her unlooked-for guests kindly, presenting the while her daughters three. Once all were seated at table she explained, as housekeepers sometimes do, the poverty of the dinner—her bread was not as she wished; the last grist from Millersburg was not as good as some; turnips and carrots came out fresh and fine from the last pit opened, but the potatoes and cabbage had been touched a little by frost; too bad! Since the corned-beef and cabbage are surely the worse; cold

tongue may help out. 'The ham we cured ourselves, it's corn-cob-smoked, and the eggs are fresh', she said. 'John says we're to have fresh meat next week when the haying starts. I am sorry I have left only plum and wild-grape jelly; but I have a mince pie on the stove for anybody who does not care for plum tarts; but you can all have both.'

Her guests, be it noted, said not a word. Silence is sometimes eloquence itself; and report goes that in the Peet house on a certain Sunday, there was silence for the space of half-an-hour.

In the fifties on the prairie, if truth must be told, the privileges of the (with) drawing-room were for men only; the women remained at the table at work! When it is recalled that at the time, the only drawing-room available was the wide outdoors, the statement need not much distress a sensitive reader.

At all events, dinner ended, true to form the men withdrew and were soon on a tour of inspection to see the farm and its appointments. Was not the warmth of May itself an invitation?

The sun lay on a glistening field,
In radiant splendor far revealed.

The owner, silent in the house, outdoors soon found his tongue; he walked in pride! Did he not well know the excellence of his holdings, bought cheap with a soldier's warrant? He talked as farmers do of crop and soil, meadow and fruit, every field enclosed by rails of walnut of which the forest offered 'inexhaustible' supply.

Our friends were almost silent. McQ said not a word; Mr. Lyon only once or twice offered query or approval. At length when far from the house, near the summit of

the region, once more the river came in sight and far away the steeples and blocks of Madison.

The view was very lovely, enhanced for the moment by the sight of a great steamboat silently moving. For the once even Mr. Peet seemed to forget himself, his farm, and his forest; the silent river, the soft lights and shadows on the motionless farspread verdant wood seemed to charm even his mercurial spirit; he was silent, save as he pointed and identified here and there some distant feature; a notch in the verdure marking the place of a westward issuing road, a touch of whiteness far away to indicate West Point.

Somehow for the spirit of man, Nature has her own way of compelling silence; none feels the soft compulsion; he simply makes discovery presently, that he himself has disappeared!

From the idle ferry, a waiting traveler some days ago, looking upward, saw in fancy the rivers of the sky! The marshalled clouds that day went streaming north; but what curious chance, he thought, avails to send across a thousand leagues the fickle, cycling, yet all-sufficient vapors — blow north, blow south, blow east, blow west — to keep the river's myriad scattered fountains ever full! He wondered; who could tell the natural history of one magnificent, unfailing stream?

On the *moving* ferry our friend had caught glimpses of the power of the Mississippi River! Awed was he, to feel it slip beneath the barge and past the Indian boatman's toy-like oar! In the clouds above he caught a single sentence of a story which might perchance be read; but on his fancy all the while arose horizons new; wider than the valley; wider than Illinois or Iowa; broader than he could even vaguely understand.

While all stood silent, our traveler pondered. In thought he boldly grasped the valley as his own! In the splendor of its mystery and beauty, the far Abyssinian 'happy valley' almost disappeared. He looked upon miles and miles of forest, touched with the glow and green of spring, illimitable it seemed, and in the very middle of it all, a sheet of silver the thrill of whose resistless motion lately felt, seemed stranger than before.

Out of the depths, he thought, did such a river rise, leap from the earth as one gigantic spring, how wondrous it would be! Is that less to be admired that finds unfailing source in clouds, the high-lifted, fleecy, flying islands of the sky? Is that less strange? Oh! all the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full. Unto the place whence the rivers come, thither they return again!

'Come on! Let's go further', cried the host as he started suddenly into the unbroken forest. 'Come on; I've something yet to show you!'

The strangers were now beyond the limits of civilization. Great oaks of several species, McQ observed, stood all about them in beautiful array, the colonnade of Nature, her columns, black, white, and purple-grey, spotted with lichens, covered with mosses, bound with climbing vines.

In such stately avenues of Atala they moved along some time, the ground still rising, and Mr. Lyon formed expectation of some wider, more far-extended view, that might perhaps show a greater stretch of river, when his guide suddenly exclaimed, 'Now then; what do you make of this?' and pointed to a low mound, ten or fifteen feet in diameter, evidently artificial. What do you think of this? and here, and here, and all around!'

'They've been here a long time', said McQ, 'see the big oaks right on top of some of them?'

'Where did the dirt come from?' said Mr. Lyon, 'I don't see any holes; there were no trees here when these were made, that's certain'.

'No', said Mr. Peet, 'they're graves! We dug into one and found bones, and tomahawks, and curious pottery. Indian mounds they say, but nobody ever saw the Indians making one; but this is a cemetery. They say the Indians one time had a great battle down below on the flats, with one another. I don't know about that, but I do know that at night, especially when it's stormy or windy, you can often hear moans and screams through these woods here, to make your hair stand on end. I always said it was screech-owls; but the people who have been here longest say it's ghosts; the noise of the battle and women crying. The coarsest of the voices are maybe owls, but the thinnest, finest — the very worst — that you often hear late in the night are not owls; they're sure enough ghosts; some say they've been seen! Let's go back!'

The men loitered, but return was quietly made. Once more the river came to view Mr. Lyon said to his companion: 'The Nile, you know, has pyramids and tombs; has the Mississippi none? Human memories hang here, I really believe, about these wooded hills capped perhaps with mounds, uncounted graves! What wild history, could we but find it, might be here.'

Just then a large white steamboat emerged as if from the northern forest, just to make perfect the picture the men yet stayed to study; but the southward movement started Mr. Peet. He turned to his guests almost fiercely and exclaiming: 'What's the news from Kansas?'

Have they burned Lawrence yet? I hope they get Doc. Robinson. He's a traitor. I wish they'd hang him, and every other man like him in the whole country! Don't they know they can't abolish slavery? Slavery is an institution, part of the government, part of the Constitution. Why can't those crazy Yankees let it alone? It's been settled as I see it, time and time again.

'But now, when only a few years ago our man, Stephen A. Douglas, put the whole thing up to the people themselves, so that the States that have slavery can have it, and them that don't want it can shut it out by vote, just as Illinois did; which is perfectly fair; then the crazy reformers in Massachusetts start a new row in Kansas to keep the people from having their own way, even before there's any State or anybody settled there at all! Why, friends, they're starting war there!

'Did you see Douglas's twentieth of March speech? It's a great speech, I tell *you*! He is the greatest man in the United States to-day, because he's the fairest. Of course, our other man, Trumbull, took the other side. That's what they have two senators for in each State, I'm told, so as the two can vote one on each side of a ticklish question and not offend anybody! But my idea is they oughtn't to discuss it at all. The men that keep the question alive ought to be jailed every one of them. Missouri, as we know, is a slave State because that's what the people want; but this here Doc. Robinson in Kansas says that "if slavery in Missouri can't get on with freedom in Kansas, then slavery in Missouri shall *die*!" That's what that impudent "black republican" said.

'I can't hardly talk about it without swearing; but I'm a Methodist and dasn't swear; but I want to tell

you, strong language would help some, if it was strong enough! I'd fight the best brother I have, before I'd put up with what those Missouri people have to stand.'

McQ laughed outright and turned the other way.

'Methodism has some good points', said Mr. Lyon. 'Among roustabouts along the river I have heard some pretty tall swearing, but I never heard any that would meet the present case; none tall enough. However, I believe with you that if people could keep still, we might get on after a while. The President has taken a hand now in Kansas, and Uncle Sam will keep the peace, I think. Where do you have your horses?'

'Oh, I haven't any work-horses except those you saw. I have an old mare with a mighty nice colt, behind the barn; we'll go back to the house and see them.'

As they reached the house again they passed through a small orchard much to Mr. Lyon's pleasure — apple trees all thrifty and promising fruit, and a dozen peach trees all in beautiful bloom!

'Apples, why not!' exclaimed Mr. Peet, 'we're going to have apples and peaches, too; some peaches to put down!

'The orchard's fenced in with the garden you notice. That's her share of the farm. She's boss in the house and garden; and semi-occasional-like, especially Sundays when there's nothin' much goin' on, I think I'm boss of the balance. Let's go to see that colt.'

The men found the colt; but behind the sheds in the yard they found something else very much more worth seeing, indeed — two wagons loaded with machinery all painted blue!

'What *have* you here?' said Mr. Lyon.

'That, sir, is McCormick's four-horse, new-improved

reaper and mower; double team, double-gearred, double-seated, double-spring, double-action, backward and forward, double everywhere! Even got an extra tongue; reminds you of the two senators, don't it? We're going to set her up to-morrow.'

'I want to see that! I would like to help set the thing up', cried Mr. Lyon, mindful of a machine he was daily expecting at home. 'May I stay and help you to-morrow?'

'Surelee! you and McQ can be unloading while I take the girls to school and get back, and Dothout gets the morning chores done; he's my hired man, you know; he's a topper, but he's just that slow! It takes him a whole hour to walk ten minutes, as the saying is.'

It was vain that McQ protested the delay. 'You're just the man we need, it takes a Welshman to know what other folks don't. A little man can think sometimes, if he can't lift; and there are a hundred pieces here, as I saw when I put them on the wagon, that I don't just know where they go. I've got a picture and you can keep track and save Hannah Jane a job; she always helps when it's complicated. If it warn't so late, I'd show you some of the odd pieces now.'

Just then, however, came driving Dothout, sure enough, with the only team, bringing the family back from Sunday school. Dothout was a man of color!

'Dothout has his Sunday at home. Has a family down below here in one of the little garden-places left by the Mormons; mighty good man is Dothout; if some Missourian does not kidnap him and his family one of these days I'll be lucky, and he will too! Go up and take seats on the porch there, gentlemen; there is a good view. Views don't cost anybody anything but, like expecta-

tions, they never turn out quite as well as you thought they would.'

Once on the porch, Mrs. Peet joined our friends and told of her apples and peaches and how they grew. She easily interested McQ by stories of her father and the Isle of Man where he was native, though now for long time wheelwright in Cleveland. 'Very much interested is he in Sunday schools', she said, 'we have such schools all about us here'. Mr. Lyon reported for Iowa; and while he wondered that nothing was said about Kansas, he certainly said nothing himself! No!

Later in the evening, when all were seated after supper, Mr. Lyon remarked that Mrs. Peet's mention of a wheelwright reminded him of Peter Cartwright long famous in central Illinois; he had not a doubt she knew the famous preacher.

'Indeed I knew him; he used to be presiding elder in this district. I have heard him preach many a time; one of the makers of this State of Illinois is he. Whatever you may think of him, he believes what he says; believes it so that nothing can stand in his way.

'I think a great deal of Peter Cartwright, but I think he often makes sad mistakes. They say it takes a great man to make a great mistake. Some years ago, the elder proved it. I blame him; and yet I don't. He is disposed to laugh at people who have education; but if he had had just a little education, "if he had had", as my father used to say, about his shop, "just one lesson in thinking, he would not have cut his finger."'

'What was his mistake?' said Mr. Lyon.

'Well, he had trouble with some Mormons who came to his camp-meeting one day and undertook a meeting of their own, not far away. He not only drove them off,

but he told them that if ever they came back they would get "Lynch law!" That was bad enough, I think. But later on he met Joe Smith. He told him the "Lord would soon send the devil and take him out of the way." Now do you know what happened? Smith and his brother, under protection of our Governor, were lodged in Hancock County jail; a mob murdered them both! That is what happened!

'That was not all. The same mob and their friends drove every Mormon they could find across the river into Iowa; twelve or fifteen thousand men, women, and children! Robbed them and destroyed their city, the largest then in Illinois! That's what happened! And Elder Cartwright apologized for all such doings!

'My father thought it awful when the United States helped the Georgians drive thousands of Indians from their homes, hundreds of miles, until a quarter of them died; but they were Indians, and the white men wanted their lands! But the Mormons are white people, our own American folks, most of them. They were blamed for all the crimes of the country. No doubt there were scamps in Nauvoo; there always are in a town of that size; but what of the men who drove them out, and took their farms, and their homes, and everything they had, and chased women and little children out to winter in Iowa, then to walk thousands of miles across the American deserts; what about such men?

'I am no Mormon, but I know there were in Nauvoo plenty of fine people. There were Englishmen and their families. We had two Englishmen to build our house, right here, at the time; fine workmen, and as fine men as you ever saw; I think our treatment of the Mormons a blot on this county that can never be forgotten!

‘Of course, Missourians began the persecution; drove these people out of Missouri to Nauvoo, just as the same people have left their own State to do the same sort of villainy in Kansas right now!

‘I am a friend of Peter Cartwright; he had tough crowds to handle all his life and he handled them! But he has never yet learned that Illinois has long ago become a civilized State. He ought to know that you can’t right anything by doing wrong; persecution never converted anybody, now, did it, Mr. Lyon? Isn’t that a fact?’

Mr. Lyon was always shrewd enough to escape serious trouble. As McQ reported it, he became just then mindful of Mr. Peet’s division of domestic jurisdiction!

‘I am not out to-day for facts, either in politics or religion, especially where they’re mixed; but about the mob I think you are entirely right. That mob was a horror, a remnant of savagery.’

By this time three lighted candles had transformed the supper table. Mr. Peet had found a small melodeon and brought it into the room. The suggestion of music relieved a situation becoming critical. But the hostess and her daughters were fond of music, and welcomed McQ’s assistance. Certain old hymns, known to all, came first; then the *Suwanee River* and other marvelous melodies of Stephen Foster, missionary of music, whose parish ranged wider even than that of our illustrious pioneer preacher.

They sang till they were tired — *Tara’s Halls*, *Annie Laurie*, and the rest. Finally, Mrs. Peet was persuaded to sing a Manx song taught her by her father, a *carvel*,* he called it; and our friend replied by a Welsh melody

* Carol

which closed the evening's program; the day was done!

When on the first telling, this point was reached in our story, Mrs. Lyon exclaimed: 'I wouldn't like to hear that you worked on Sunday, but — *did* you ever get that machine set up? Will it work?'

'Of course we got the reaper set up and it will work, great clumsy thing that it is; but we worked till afternoon. We didn't get to Fort Madison until five o'clock. Too late for reaching home, we took the road to West Point. Hester, do you remember the first people you had in the new guest-room?'

'Indeed I do. Two men they were; the older wore earrings, a golden horse-shoe hanging on each side, "to help the eyes"! I shall never forget that. I thought they were horse-doctors; they were out building colleges! Tennessee said he listened on the stage, but from what they said he couldn't make out what they were after. They talked about money, he said, but they did not swear, so he sent them to me.'

'Exactly. Well; McQ and I had hardly entered West Point when who should hail us but these same two men, earrings and all. The younger has now a college of his own! The old courthouse has become a college, and Professor Cowles the president. Nothing would do but we must go out to see the college.

'I know nothing about a college, as you know; but they have evening classes; McQ wanted to go, so seven o'clock found us in the old courtroom. Sure enough there was the professor busy with a class in declamation. For Spartacus, as usual, the lion, was heard "roaring in his den", his eternal appetite still for three days unappeased. Spartacus spoke loud and well; then followed another country boy voicing for the prairies, once

more, Patrick Henry's immortal choice; and the class was done.

'The professor knew, somehow, that I know no more about a college than a professor does about farming; it was McQ he was after. Whether to teach something, or to learn something, McQ now must tell.

XXII

McQ FINDS A COLLEGE

THE man was evidently surprised and embarrassed, but he took the cue. 'I have long since learned', he said, 'to obey the wish of host or hostess, however unexpected. To be sure, I was so much interested in what Mr. Lyon has been saying that I had forgotten largely my part in the narrative. But to me the situation in West Point was very instructive; a courthouse for a college, very curious! Almost impossible with us since the courtroom is so very different in appointments.

'Of course, in England, the court itself is the same; but its provisions are quite different. The seat and desk of the judge are on one side, ten or twelve feet above the floor! His associate — the clerk here — sits in front on a raised platform, but some distance still below his honor, so that to speak to him the associate steps upon a convenient chair!

'On the judge's right the witness stands on a platform, reached by stairs, face to face with the court; on the left, the jury on benches rising toward the ceiling. Around the associate, the lawyers' desks rise from the floor in tiers. The room is small, and for the public there is little or no place.

'At West Point, I found a large room furnished with aisles and pews, to accommodate the public, while the court evidently takes its chances, almost on the same level. But now this room holds an assembled college! Very remarkable!

'Professor Cowles did me the honor to make many

inquiries, and it was indeed interesting to compare educational ideas in England and here, at this moment when nothing is settled in one place or the other.

‘However; not much happened. The professor, no sooner he heard that I came from Wales, began forthwith to tell of American colleges, not without some pride.

‘You see’, he said, ‘as a people we aim at a system of universal education planned for the Republic and now taking shape throughout the northern States; but in the meantime the various churches emulate each other in an effort to help out; so that in this new commonwealth while the common schools have made a beginning in elementary work, for higher education there is yet no public provision. Accordingly colleges rise in every county. Our college-idea starting with Harvard, comes from England; I wish I might see in this country the splendid schools you have in England.’

‘Yes, we have many wonderful schools in England; but they are nearly all church schools, and while they no doubt do the nation great service, thousands of men and women never hear of them at all.’

‘Where do these get instruction then?’

‘Oh, my dear sir’, I said, ‘don’t you know that the ordinary Englishman is not supposed to need education; he wouldn’t know what to do with it if he had it; at least, it is so believed. Schools in Europe generally are for the great, for the nobility, for the rich, for members of the church. No dissenter, for instance, can even enter Oxford, nor take a degree at all at Cambridge. As for workingmen, what Englishmen call the “masses”, nobody ever thinks of them; I suppose not one in ten can read or write. At any rate five or six years ago* in-

* 1850

vestigation showed that for all the fine schools you have heard of, only one person in eight in England has ever been at a school of any kind at all.'

'But you have "public schools", schools for the people; how about Rugby and the work of Thomas Arnold?'

'All under control of the church. They are fine schools, fitting men for the universities; but very few ever feel their force or enjoy what they afford! Arnold would have helped, had he been able, had he lived; his early death was a great loss; but the whole situation is wrong. Beg your pardon, sir; I don't know how it is here, but in England church schools will never do; they never have helped the people, they never will. The deans and the dons, the canons and the priests march about in silks and laces while the "masses" are sunk deeper and deeper in hopeless, helpless darkness, a mere struggle for beer and bread.'

'Have you no schools supported by the state?'

'The state is doing something, but what is done is almost useless. Effort has been made in parliament again and again to go to some national system, but the claim of the church to control has, so far, blocked all reform. The vast body of the people will have nothing to do with the church. They are non-conformists, dissenters, etc., supporting churches of their own.'

'Why do not these people then organize schools of their own?'

'They do, as far as they can; but they are miserably poor. Browning's *Christmas Eve* or *Easter Day* describes too well a congregation of our people. We read of "merrie England", children in beautiful homes dance about the Christmas fires and in the great schools prebendaries warm their slippers at the open grate; but

the coals that cheer our cities are mined by women who never know warmth, and little children, crawling in the darkness of pitchy caverns, children in passages so narrow that only their little bodies can find way; all day long pecking coal, six days in the week, year in, year out. In Wales the vast majority of the people receive their only education in the Sunday schools, thank God for these! In some Sunday schools the pupils, old and young, are taught to read and write, but in most they learn only the stories and songs of the Bible; this their only knowledge.'

'Blessed Bible!' said the professor, his religious sympathy dominating for the moment, 'blessed Bible! knowledge of its content *is* an education.'

'I do not think so', I replied, 'I hardly know which is worse, knowledge of the Bible without knowledge of anything else, or the reverse: the Bible needs a background of intelligence!

'Let me illustrate. Some ten years ago people called Chartists made a great stir in England as you know; and it really seemed as if some of the reforms so plainly needed were surely on the way. There were some disorders, as is usual when ignorant people rebel against manifest injustice. In Wales these took the form of practical protest against an oppressive highway system. The roads were all turnpikes, barred at intervals for toll.

'The Welsh moved for free roads and took to carrying off the toll gates! In fact, they organized for the purpose and named themselves *Rebeccaites*! And why? Rather why not? Does not the Bible disclose such an idea? They appropriated to modern use in all seriousness a Bible text, a blessing on Rebecca — "Let thy seed

possess the *gate* of those which hate them!" Hardly credible, is it? — but true!

'The Bible, as I see it, must be understood in accordance with the conditions under which its various parts appeared, and in the light of long human experience. The man who studies the Bible only, has gotten no further, in matters political at least, than the patriarchs; or, at best, than the first and second Christian centuries, mirrored in the translation named of King James. At any rate, people nowadays must have information wider than that of the poor Chartists ten years ago, honest men that they were.

'But this after all has nothing to do with the question; we were talking of schools in England. Practically they are all church schools; always have been; and my complaint is that the church has absolutely neglected the masses, and allows religious considerations to block the way of improvement now.'

'The present movement of the non-conformists will meet the case, schools born of the people will save the people', said the professor.

'There you have it! The people, the people! The whole difference lies in those two words. You talk of the *people*; the English politician or churchman speaks of the *masses*. All manhood, womanhood, humanity vanish in that word! What are the masses? A great surging, swarming herd, whose struggle for existence makes possible the higher life of the noble and the privileged. But all the time they, the masses, *are* people, and not until they become *the* people will there be any real improvement.

'I am free to admit that church schools, parochial schools, etc., are not, to start with, precisely what we

want. They are too diffuse, indefinite, set for culture, refinement, the "accomplishments". Besides, as you say, the emphasis is often religious; and, valuable as any or all these things may be, that is not what we are set for now. We are attempting self-government, government by the people, i.e., we are committing civilization to the hazard of suffrage, and the public school shall bring men to fitness for responsibility such as that!

'How next to impossible would seem the task! How tremendous the undertaking!'

'Nay; how splendid the undertaking! how clear the purpose! how definite the end! and the effort, shall it not be commensurate, thorough, direct, persistent, until the elements of our simple statecraft become at least some part of the intellectual equipment of every would-be citizen in the State?'

'Impossible', said I, 'when a country like England with all her universities, and the experience of centuries, can hardly find a few men in a generation competent to manage her affairs, how do you expect to inform a whole nation in matters of administration and government?'

'By means the simplest, by common, prairie schools, with fewest subjects excellently taught, all pressing to a single end! Our purpose purely practical and secular, how much indeed may be omitted, or deferred! Catechism we need not, nor art, nor agriculture, nor Latin; we need English, and geography, and history, and geometry — things like that.'

'The coming citizen must first of all have English that he may presently read and understand that which has been written. I can see that; but why geometry? And what about religion, morals? What about letters, art, philosophy, science? Do you propose to leave all these

things out, in your scheme of public education? I saw that the professor was something of an enthusiast, a dreamer, as I suspected from the first. Are you inventing a new education, as the French invented a calendar?’

‘No! Practically only the elements, well taught and set to definite, determined purpose, do I set out. Why geometry? Well, for one thing, because it is the most easily accessible science. It can be taught any time, anywhere. Its lines and circles lie upon the ground; even children learn to use its figures. But I confess I love geometry as such. Of all God’s thoughts in this universe, geometry offers the simplest, the clearest, those most legible to all men.

‘How about morals? As hinted already, geometry is a fountain of morality. By cunning metaphor, all the finest quality of our purest morals finds geometric expression, as we move on in rectitude to “the land of uprightness”! Beautiful, beautiful! Right angles fit; morality says justice. From point to point geometry draws a line; morality says, “turn not to the right hand nor to the left, refrain thy foot from evil”. Kant, you know, links the inner morality with the stars; Kant was a poet, a seer. The inner morality is the reflex of the stars, eternal, true, and pure as they! Besides, geometry is pure logic, reasoning. It is mensuration, surveying, construction; just what every citizen needs to know.

‘But for the State, morality is obedience to the law, and law embodies the sense of the community in what is just and right, the teacher, the exemplar! Only obedience makes possible a public school: its order, its discipline become effective where, as theme after theme unfolds, the spirit of loyalty kindles more and more. Law is our rule of behavior, demands and holds our

reverence, and our Constitution — when we study it, we find something to adore! May it not be changed!

‘Such morals, such order, such appreciation, citizens of the commonwealth must have and feel. Thus and thus only is free, public education to be justified.

‘Once I saw an Indian with a bow. He showed me an arrow with a point of steel. In curious silence he raised the bow, released the barb; there was no sound, no trace; but when I looked again, lo, the arrow quivered in the center of the mark. So here; our aim is clear and definite; we think the means — like the arrow tipped with steel — simple, unhampered, unvexed, all unadorned and unconfused, moving in silence on viewless path, are sure to reach the mark.

‘All those things you mention are good, desirable of course, but at present beside the point. They contribute to the happiness of people and so to the stability of government; but let no one think that such studies meet in vital way the needs of the Republic; they do not; they may even muffle, divert, impede the arrow, send it early to the ground. The State needs in her citizenship, just now, knowledge of the present, the wisdom of experience, the morality of obedience; obedience to law founded in fair-play, justice, right. Civic intelligence, civic competence, is the justifiable aim of the common school; training, the word!’

‘Did you ever see a school like that?’

‘Not exactly. It is an ideal to which, as I believe, we shall approach, more and more nearly, as we go forward in democratic life. But, personally, I beg to say we have it here! I am busy in this little college, as you see. It is a church school only because a church affords building and teachers, lends it a name. Following old-time

custom, illustrious examples, we offer various themes, but I assure you public, civic education is not for a moment forgotten! We study English, and mathematics, and history. We know about the men who have loved freedom; we declaim Burke and Pitt and Macaulay, Webster, and Clay; we read the Constitution. I have Story at my hand; and we discuss the government of our township, county, and State. So you see that to-day, even in a church school, the arrow flies.'

'But', I said, 'church schools are church schools, bear the name of some denomination, and are so far exclusive. Besides, when endowed, they tend to become aristocratic; they are for those able to pay; they may help, but will never save — not in England. Once endowed, they do not reach the "masses"'. You must give the people, the plain people, a chance to help themselves; then you reach them, and they are proud of it.'

'Of course, we are ready here for just that thing', said the professor. 'We have made a beginning; our free schools have made a start and are certain to go far; and, as you say, the people are proud of them. In our many church schools, as here, we strive only to help.

'Even for ordinary elementary schools, the State as yet makes small provision. All that rests with the people, where, as you say, it belongs. In our colleges at present, I must tell you, we have little or no endowment, and aristocracy is far from us. We work because democratic; a labor of love is ours.'

'Yes; but an English professor would laugh at you and your college. He would say, "why bless me, man! that is no college in the old courthouse! Why man, you don't know what a college is! You have no foundation; you have not even a university, nor a faculty, no fags,

no fellows, not even a proctor or a sergeant! Man! Man! You will never do at all; and they say ye're a preacher besides; extraordinary! Ye're nearly as bad off as they are in Scotland, only one college in a university there; you might call yours a university just as well as a college!

'But', replied the professor, 'our little denominational college is doing a most useful thing; it stands for education, keeps the field. It helps every free public school now at work by showing the pupils that education is good; has always something more to offer; some of our young folk enjoy it and all hear about it. This creates a sentiment which shall yet develop the public schools to their utmost and best.

'Our plan, as you know, includes a real university, State university — letters, science, law, medicine, great libraries, and all that. Public education, education requisite to intelligent use of suffrage, the education I have sketched, shall be free and compulsory; but university education which shall fit selected men to practice the learned professions, whether in art or science, law, medicine, or teaching, shall, of course, by tuition pay their cost. The general taxpayer can hardly be expected to pay for service which inures so largely, financially, to the benefit of the few.

'But that is far in the future; at this moment the great need of the commonwealth is free common schools, with teachers who can *see the arrow*. In response to this out-crying need the university has begun temporarily as a normal college. One day it will be great, have four or five hundred students, do university work; provided political bargaining and the jealousies of various localities can be restrained from thwarting the high

purpose of the people, all the people, to whom a university commensurate with the future of Iowa will be a glorious inspiration for all the years to come.'

'Here we were interrupted. Mr. Lyon began to clap his hands and pound the table. He meant applause, as he afterward told me; just as if he had cried "Hear! Hear!"

'Well; we all laughed, stopped talking about colleges; and wishing the professor success in his great service to "all the people" we bade him good night.'

'He called McQ brother, and welcomed him to the educational forces of Iowa', said Mr. Lyon, supplementing his guest's report, 'he hailed him as a brother! Indeed he did'.

'Robert! Robert! How could you talk so much to a perfect stranger! You'll be jabbering to beat a Frenchman if ye're in America another year! You, brother to a professor the whiles convoying wi' a man wha drives on the Sabbath day; I really wonder at ye, *Brother McQ!*'

'I suppose it's all because I am not so wise, so discreet as an Irishwoman', said Robert, 'but, Alison, he asked me questions continually; I can not remember the half of them; the professor wanted to know!'

'But here was I, frightened the whole day long, and at night like to greet, in a strange, wild land, and you stopping to give knowledge to the notables ye met. Ye should be a bit modest, even if ye had no care of me!'

'Robert talked well', rejoined Mr. Lyon. 'He really gave the professor the information he asked. I was immensely interested; but we came home by the only open way. To-day we spent at the Carob farms, went all over them with Philo Morris, planning great things,

Madame, for you and for Robert. On the way, I can tell you, he kept referring to Alison. I was much puzzled, I assure you, for with us Alison suggests a man; but by the manner of his speech I soon came to understand.'

'And now, how do you imagine, sir! I ever got past the great hotels? Do you think I saw no braw young men wi' black hats and red kerchiefs? Ah, Robert, ye little ken what your wife has been seeing and doing, the while ye've been riding the hills and telling your havers*. What did you say was his name, that man wi' the college?'

'Cowles was his name; I think he's Irish.'

'Did he say you're a handsome man, and he hoped more of the likes of ye were on the way to Iowa?'

'No; perhaps he's Scotch.'

'Did he bid ye bide for a wee drappie?'

'Not at all!'

'Weel, then he's no Scotch; he's likely naething but a poor American!'

'That was a wise brother of yours, Mr. Lyon', interposed his wife, 'when he sent a big lump of sugar with you; and you nearly lost that!'

'Robert, let us go out and set guards for the night', said Mr. Lyon, 'it's safer.'

* Gossip

XXIII

THE LYCEUM

‘SURELY the community of kindred spirits, like the communion of the saints, knows not the limitation of space or years’, said Father Blew when he heard that the neighbors had formed a debating society to meet in the schoolhouse and at the instance of Philo Morris had named the organization a *Lyceum*, the specific title to be later on determined.

The organization was effected at a meeting called at the house of Gerrit Simpson one October evening in the early fifties. At this first session Mr. Simpson, as was fitting, acted as temporary president, and his niece, newly arrived from the east, was named secretary *pro tem*. A constitution having been drawn up and adopted, not without discussion and some amendment, numerous signatures soon established a vigorous charter membership, ready for further business. A motion prevailed to make the temporary organization permanent; another, requesting Father Blew to make the opening address on the Friday evening next following, was adopted; and the meeting adjourned.

The constitution declared the object of the organization ‘the literary and social improvement and entertainment of its members and their friends’. The members were of two classes, active and honorary. The latter were described as ‘men of literary, social, political, or educational prominence in the United States of America.’ Such were nominated and elected by the active

membership; but beyond recognition of the compliment, were, as usual, exempt from dues or duties!

Under such conditions, the honorary list was large; so large indeed that no one remembered its comprehensiveness; indeed, after one or two mishaps, our secretary was definitely instructed to preserve a list of intended victims, and to consult the same before notifying any newly selected candidate, lest 'men of distinction' be embarrassed by some double crown of honor.

Nevertheless, the list bore many distinguished names. Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Douglas both thought the courtesy worth acknowledging, and so did Emerson and Whittier. Of course, Mr. James Harlan, Governor James W. Grimes, and other men prominent in State affairs, were not without notice. Tradition has it that no one ever formally declined the honor proposed; some failed to make reply; but in those days the mails were less dependable!

Many of the gentlemen honored by the lyceum took occasion in reply to express good will, 'appreciation of enterprise', 'intelligent effort', 'example worthy of imitation by older, more populous communities', etc. This, to be sure, we expected; but now and then came the suggestion that an institution of such promise and ambition should bear some better title, better than a mere ordinal numeral.

Now strange to relate, to such friendly spirits our secretary could venture no reply. Does not our history record long continued effort in this particular detail of organization; all to no purpose? A personal name was frequently suggested but none ever met unqualified acceptance. Father Blew first declined the compliment because, as he said, and all admitted, the proposed title,

'The Blew Lyceum', gave color at least to equivocal interpretation!

'But to me', said Father Blew, 'the word Lyceum comes like the breath of the early morning: it suggests all the sweet things of the life of the spirit. I see again those old-time, wonderful men, more than two thousand years ago, walking the shaded paths about the fair temple of the God of Light, in their quiet converse seriously revolving the great problems of the human mind, solving for all time the methods by which all truth must be approached and sought; finding at the same time a rational basis for human conduct that has charmed and solaced all the generations since, from Cicero with his villa and shaded walks upon the Italian hills to the latest seeker after truth who upon an Iowa prairie would match the Universe of God to the aspirations of the soul; binding the world in a blessed fellowship never to be dissolved so long as humanity endures. Surely the community of kindred spirits, like the communion of the saints, knows no limitation of either space or years.'

Names of political heroes were discarded for reasons purely partisan, of course; even the Olympian Daniel, because of the seventh of March speech, missed our little assistance as he passed on to immortality! Partisan feeling in those days, alas! was not sweetened by the passing of the years.

To the surprise of all, names of distinguished men of letters were almost as unfortunate as those of politicians. Emerson, for example, might go on the honor list, but sponsor he might not be; though a friend of John Brown, was he not entirely erratic as a preacher, and almost absolutely unintelligible as an essayist and poet!

Philo Morris, chairman of a committee out to select

a name, suggested the classic quarries. Personally he had given us practical illustration of possibilities in this special field. In due succession he had named his sons Socrates, Plato, Euclid, and Herodotus; the last, by common consent, afterwards changed to Hesiod, because the lad, the would-be god-son of history's very father, became at school merely a 'much abused Herod!'

However, Mr. Morris, in naming the lyceum had free course and ample time, and from the remnants of ancient culture brought many a polysyllabic, quaint device suitable no doubt, for fathering of the immortal gods, had such insignia of appropriate splendor been offered for their adopting. But not a single one found favor, it appears, in the ears of his more rustic neighbors; who, meanwhile formed a habit of referring to the school district number, and 'Lyceum No. 3' it became, and this designation remained down to the latest chapter of its story.

Letters from distinguished gentlemen favoring us with gracious acceptance were, unfortunately, save in one single case, so far as known, never preserved. That from Horace Greeley probably still extant, owed its preservation not to its content or to its author's fame, but purely to its chirographic art — or the lack of it! At the first session following the letter's receipt, our secretary reported a missive from *The Tribune* office, but asked permission to defer its reading until the session following. This was granted, and further continuance two weeks later. At length, by aid of the schoolmistress, Squire Marks, and the much-enduring postmaster, the letter was made out, read, and duly transcribed upon the minutes. For the benefit of that future historian, much proclaimed, who will doubtless upon arrival, ex-

press gratitude for labor spared if not for added or unexpected information, the letter *in toto* here appears:

The Tribune Office,
New York,
Jany- 15th, 185-

Secy. Lyceum No. 3,
Dear Madame:

I have yours of recent date.

I am a member of the human family, of the anti-slavery-Whig party, of the Sons of Temperance and of the Universalist Church, and if it will do you any good for me to belong to your Lyceum, I have no objections.

Yours etc.

HORACE GREELEY

Membership, organization, and name thus duly adjusted, it remained for sundry by-laws to prescribe ways and means for carrying into effect the purpose of the society. Bi-weekly sessions were provided for Friday evenings through the year, the first on Friday following the Monday on which the school might begin its autumn session. The first session each recurring year should be chiefly social — should we not all seek acquaintance with the teacher? — although at this first session officers for the year might be duly selected. The second session should be given to debate, to lecture, or some other type of literary entertainment. And so the Fridays came and went from mid-autumn cool, until the glad warmth of May summoned us all to the imperative, wondrous miracle of life.

Such was the entirely unnoteworthy form and order of Lyceum No. 3; but of its value, its influence, who can tell? Our minutes declare the very first program a debate discussing the question: 'Resolved that a *Lyceum* is essential to a republican form of government'. The decision was unanimously in the affirmative.

All later experience on the prairie did but confirm the accuracy of that decision.

The usefulness of the organization became more and more evident with the years; social life was quickened; oratory developed; and, as for debate, the fame of our discussions lives on the prairie to this day. Were not our porch stoics all philosophers, and where on this green earth did philosophers — children, or lovers of wisdom — ever settle anything without prolonged discussion, disputation even? Without such exercise in this 'topsy-turvy world' how shall men, self-governors, at all get forward? In the physical world, has not each object of inspection weight and form, breadth, length, and thickness, and all about it must not the sons of men run, walk, or fly, if possible, if they would learn to any purpose essential character or quality? Even the simple cube has facets six; the earth, the sphere, how many? Men must both see and feel, and then perchance be left in doubt. How is the difficulty then increased in the shadow-world of mind, where men perforce must also toil and reach conclusions wide; where even seeing and feeling, nay all the faculties, are but *metaphors*, amid all wavering projections from the world without, spectra shot through slits of more than fraunhoferian fineness, their runic lines sent back from shifting walls unnumbered in a thousand mirrored halls!

The pioneer, like many another mariner brave, on human seas uncharted, stopped never for considerations such as these. He boldly attacked any and every problem, even though the only possible issue of discussion were the discovery that for one reason or another, answer could not be. Oftenest he found the limits of individual knowledge; information sad but of value high-

est to the wise! Not infrequently and sadder still those other limits barred his way where to all our most eager searching, Nature by her very silence seems to say, 'Thus far!' However, there still be those with confidence in revelations made to 'babes'; let us suppose to men of open mind!

It may be conceded as surely true that much of what came up on the porch was inconsequential to a degree, and led to nothing further; it is equally a matter of fact, however, that the same parliament was a veritable seed-bed for questions that presently did emerge in the lyceum and there received serious consideration. Thus the influence of the moon or moonlight on the germination of seeds and the growth of plants generally was discussed in formal debates, but nearly all data had been previously developed on the porch. The aseity of fermentation was long discussed in the parliament before it appeared as a problem for the wisest under the name of spontaneous generation, the origin of life. In fact, every theory respecting life, its beginning, history, and the marvelous variety of its myriad differentiated and perfected forms, the meaning and the story of earth's creation; all this was a matter of serious thought and question on the porch, since data still were few.

However, Davie and Morton Leslie had the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, Father Blew had *Footprints of the Creator*, and Squire Marks was a constant student of both books. Brother McQ brought *Tennyson* to the prairie and introduced him in various ways. Once on an entertainment evening, he read *Maud* to the lyceum, telling as he read, and as only an intelligent student could tell, the conditions in England which could make the poem possible.

Vain the attempt to recall, much less describe, the deeds and doings of that old-time debating club at No. 3. Its activity ceased with the beginning of the Civil War and that is long ago. Only now and then for some older man, something occurs to start the vision of forgotten things, and memory for the moment claims her own.

Some particular debates, however, were notable at the time and were spoken of as models of accomplishment in after years when 'surviving pioneers' were inclined to tell of the excellence of former days 'better than these'.

One discussion argued the relative importance of art and nature in the lives of men, under the time-honored challenge: 'Resolved that Art is superior to Nature.' Because of our simple ways, let no man deem us lacking in formality when rose occasion for its display. In fact, our correctness was not infrequently painful to all concerned, as when once Mr. Ramsgate is said to have spent a night at the schoolhouse, having declined as president to entertain what he esteemed an irregularity, a motion to adjourn offered before the program for the next meeting had been announced. Was it not so provided in our by-laws? He at least would not adjourn. At their own petition debaters appeared upon the program. When accepted they must state the question and name two judges, the third named by the president on the evening of performance.

When, therefore, in due course, the bold asseveration above cited was pronounced, and as disputants the names of Mr. William Ramsgate and Mr. Morton Leslie were made public, followed by the names of Mr. Philo Morris and Hon. Stephen Manapee as judges, the sur-

prise amounted almost to a sensation. The theme, the boldness, not to say presumption, of the youthful speakers amused the more experienced, but provoked the less courteous to criticism. 'The question is old enough at any rate', said Mr. Morris, 'I suppose every generation has had a turn at it for 4000 years.' 'It is so large that the boys will probably hardly come in sight of each other during the whole evening', said Father Blew, 'but let them try: we'll all enjoy it.'

'That's what comes of "sending a boy to college"', said Mr. Dennis. William and Morton had both a few terms at the academy. 'That's education for you', he said. 'Send young fellows no further than West Point or Denmark and they come home so conceited they think they know it all. They talk about things nobody cares anything about anyhow. What they learn at school is not for a minute practical; that's the way I look at it.'

'They'll be over it soon enough', said Davie. 'Your practical things are not always best; practical jokes, for instance, are often not well received, however useful. At any rate to stir the prairie up a little about something interesting may be more practical in the long run than to keep harping away too constantly on the gr-e-a-t problem of "squatter sovereignty", or the wrongs of Uncle Tom. Hold up on your practical a bit, till ye hear what the lads have to say.'

Mr. Dennis was such a serious citizen that he offered to practical jokers no end of temptation. Neither could he endure with any unusual patience the foolishness of which his neighbors were now and then guilty. Davie was believed to have good reason for knowing all about this, and in referring to 'squatter sovereignty' as a *great* problem, he intentionally roused Mr. Dennis to

white heat. He started for his tormentor, but the wary Davie had dropped from the porch-edge, disappeared around the corner of the building, nor was to be seen again that evening. The porch fell silent but only for a moment, for when the aggrieved farmer referred to his adversary as a 'shrewd rascal' with some qualifying epithets, harmless perhaps thus spoken in the open air, there was a general roar and the course of conversation passed to other topics — but not sooner than the voice of Shinder, the store-clerk, was lifted up to say that right 'inside right now may be seen the very latest samples of French art ever shown upon the prairie.'

When the curious farmers rushed in to see, he opened a box of feather flowers for ladies' bonnets, and there was fun enough. Shinder was not killed on the spot, however, but under the name of Skinner, later made himself glorious in retail trade in town; and was he not at length one of the founders of the Institute of Fine Arts!

XXIV

THE LYCEUM : POSITIVE

IN the days gone by, in the absence of all shelter, winter in the open prairie was wild and fierce. On a pathless, fenceless plain —

You shall not be over-bold,
When you deal with arctic cold.

Many a pioneer found this out to his own sorrow, if not to that of his surviving kinsmen. But occasionally came winter ideal. Frosts, of course; but the cold came on so softly, with stealth so gentle that its approach was not perceived. Day succeeded day so bright, so warm, so sunny, that e'er men knew, the weeks had passed and months, without suggestion of storm or snow.

First there came showers at night; and, in warm valleys, sluggish oxen cropped abundant grass; cornfields were white like silver; oaks were crimson, sumacs on the hillsides scarlet; elms, walnuts, hazels, with shrubs and bushes all, slowly turning to yellow by the streams. No wind came rushing to strip the drowsy branches; hour by hour the leaves came slanting, sifting through the opalescent air. Only in the morning the cottonwood, at touch of some slight breath, sent down its gold in showers, sibilant rustling to the sandy beach of lake or stream — Indian summer!

Indian summer we awaited always; but only once and anon in passing years did the spirit of the season, overjoyous in her strange success, fly on and on. Thanksgiving might be passed with its turkeys, pumpkin-pies,

and mince; Christmas even, and still no storm; until at length the goal-post of the years now fairly turned, the forward-looking face of Janus left behind, and half the very month he calls his own — then, only then at length, did the happy spirit of October firmly take its leave, vanishing in storms belated, with tempests of driving, drifting snow.

November; Indian summer still, and Mr. Ramsgate had his place on Saturday with the stoics on the porch. He heard the remarks of Mr. Dennis, and the jests of others. Personally, concerned even as Davie, he nevertheless held his peace until he reached his home. There, as seems likely, he was less discreet. At any rate, a week later Mrs. Ramsgate, talking as usual to Miss Blew, had indeed something very definite to say concerning the program.

‘I never heard a thing about that debate, Miss Blew, until the middle of the week, because I didn’t go to the first meeting; neither did Pap. We counted as they wouldn’t be nothing done nohow, only election of officers and such; so we didn’t go over.

‘But I knew there was something affecting William; he set around so kind o’ dumpish-like and wouldn’t go outside except to help a little with what chores they is to do, which isn’t much this time of year.

‘I couldn’t even get him out to drive Selim; that’s what Hosie calls the Lyon colt, you know; but wherever he got that name, I don’t know; but that horse is just spoiling for want of exercise, and it’s a pity too, for he’s just the prettiest critter, Miss Blew, you ever did set eyes on. I told William he should drive over some evening and let you see that horse and take a ride if you would venture yourself behind a fast horse, which I

wouldn't nohow; no; not at my age. Hosie, you know, is away just now.'

'I shall be delighted to take a ride with William any time', said Miss Blew, 'and will go any fine evening if he comes over. I am so pleased to know that he is to debate at the lyceum and I like the question.'

'Oh, I've no objection to William doing his part; we sent him to the college; he ought to be good for some things. About the question, I have no opinion at all. The storekeeper thinks it has something to do with his new kind of flowers. If that's so, it won't do. Our William knows just as much about feather flowers as the chicken that furnished the feathers; not any more. But the hen knows what feathers is for; Shinder doesn't. He thinks they are to make flowers: they are not! They look like feathers, Miss Blew, they don't look like flowers any more than a hen looks like a *bokay*! But what worries me is the jedges; with those two men, William has no chance at all. Philo Morris is a good neighbor and all that, but he doesn't know enough to give his children Christian names, and about blackberries, he's plumb crazy; trying to get a cross, he says, between wild berries and tame, which will be wild enough to grow in Iowa and tame enough to eat. Pap says his whole place is run to blackberry bushes. Besides, he is working all the time on a perpetual-motion-machine. He says the ancients claimed there was no motion; but the fact is there is nothing but motion, and he's going to prove it. As you know, his wife is a perpetual-motion-machine herself, and if it wasn't for her and Mr. Lyon, the Morrisises would starve to death, blackberries, big names, and all. Mark Lyon is kind o' sorry for him, I think!'

'He has managed to get a pretty nice little farm up

there on the hill', said Miss Blew. 'He has gotten almost all of Lawtonville; and he sent me some fine peaches, and they say he has apples.'

'Mr. Lyon did that for him; bought tax-titles and gave them to him, so they say. Only Emerson and Whittier won't sell their lots; they'll get tired of paying taxes after a while. But the other judge is a member of the legislature, has been up to Iowa City a time or two jurisdicting around. You know he thinks William wants his job; what kind of a judge would that be? Pap put him up to it; one of Pap's brothers was in the Mexican War.

'Pap says they's very few men as are fit for the legislature at all, and those that are, either won't go or can't get elected; so you never can tell. It's a way of Providence that such as do go most generally don't do nothing; but some as you don't expect much of, does manage to start something that amounts to a good deal. That's how we got the 'sylum built, which is handy to be sure, as far as that goes; but there are somethings we don't want *too* handy; it's for people that's crazy-like. They took Landsman's brother up there in the spring; but he's one of them regular non-composers anyway; he never did no harm to nobody; I always thought he was tuck just to fill up, 'cause Landsman didn't want him 'round no more. Mebbe there's others up there for the same reason, as far as I know.

'Well, I don't know as I blame Mr. Landsman; such people is often just as well one place as another and sometimes a good deal better. They're like a dog in a meeting-house; they get no good of what's going on and are no help to anyone else. Oh yes; I'm in favor of taking good care of non-composers. The good Lord

looks out for all us human persons, I reckon, but it just looks to me as He needs all the help down here He can get. Mr. Manapee meant to come to the help of the Lord, I suppose; but it turned out He came to the help of Gottlieb first.'

Miss Blew indeed made some reply, but her lively guest noted not the interruption and went right on discussing, not without a certain shrewdness, the weakness of our democratic institutions generally, especially as illustrated in the political career of our active representative so soon to sit as judge of debate in Lyceum No. 3. She commended Governor Grimes for his teetotal sentiments, but added: 'Pap says, "we never could have elected old Tippecanoe if it warn't for good cider and good weather"', which it was, Miss Blew, just such weather as we're having now. We got one good thing of the Indians, anyhow, when we got Indian summer, didn't we, Miss Blew? I hope it lasts till after Friday evening next, I surely do.'

A gifted woman was Mrs. Ramsgate. But on the wide prairie did she not have rivals? Was it not said that on a quiet summer afternoon, over all the township, doors and windows open wide, a peculiar rustling murmur might betimes be heard, faint, musical, yet in measured human sweetness, soft-blending, reënforcing as was believed, that other harmony elusive, which at such a season the shafts of sun-light seem to stir on hill and in valley, on far-stretching plain, in foliage of solemn, silent trees, in springing grass blades of wild marsh and meadow, nor less in myriad pushing corn-leaves on a hundred glowing farms—the melody of things that grow, the old, old, far-floating melody of Life's unending, dreamy song.

For two young gentlemen, at least, Friday came in this week all too soon. Yes, Mrs. Ramsgate, Indian summer tarried; fine enough to elect a president without hard cider; you would now have none of that, everybody on the prairie knew.

The day has been bright and warm, and the starlit evening is not too cool. The little schoolhouse is full from side to side, and many outside the building stand attentive, or peer in by open door or windows. Father Blew is there, of course, his sister at his side. Close at hand is William's mother, dressed in her best, her winter bonnet new bedecked with ribbons — no feather flowers — to please her thoughtful daughters. Mr. Ramsgate lingered outside, disputing with Squire Marks the morality of art in general, and the propriety of other than merely critical reference to such a subject. Philo Morris is in his usual corner with Mr. Kibbuts, a new member brought by Mr. Camfield. Mrs. Lyon is there with Mrs. McQ and Miss Simpson, while Brother McQ has found a friend in Davie. Hon. J. M. Manapee comes in, led by Mr. Dennis and has a seat not far from Mr. Morris. Indeed, as Mrs. Ramsgate expressed it, 'They was all there, Miss Blew, no such crowd since Billy Har-kinson's funeral; him as got drowned, you know.'

Roll-call of the membership opened the session. Was now and then response less audible? The lenient secretary knew to allow for distance; the respondent stood outside.

The secretary rose and read the question and named the disputants in the midst of general hand-clappings, such was the pride of our people in their young men. When quiet returned, the president named Dr. Willow-bush as third judge, and called the speaker for the af-

firmative, Mr. William Ramsgate. William rose, said, 'Mr. President', and amid loud applause moved to the front: 'Mr. President, honorable judges, ladies *and* gentlemen:

'Judging from what I have heard during the past few days, I conclude that the question now before us is the most interesting one we could have found. Conceding a point to my opponent, I may say that it seems to be the very nature of our people to talk about art. Furthermore, all seem to agree that no one knows anything about the subject; but this serves only to make the interest deeper. Perhaps it is a rule we love to study what is out of reach; we studied the stars sooner than the world we walk on, men say; the mind sooner than the body.

'At any rate, gentlemen, judges, I admit that when we chose this question, we did not either of us know much about it, at least I didn't. We took it because we wanted to know something about it; to see what there was to say about art, anyway as compared with nature which we thought we understood.

'Now, by the rules, the first thing I have to do is to define the question. Of course when Morton and I chose it, we agreed as to its meaning. In order to be sure about art, we went together to Squire Marks' and looked up the word in Webster's quarto. Most people think that art stands for pictures and that sort of thing; I thought so too, but here is what Webster says:

'Art — The disposition or modification of things by human skill to answer the purpose intended. In this sense art stands opposed to nature.

'We accept this definition, of course, and for this debate art shall stand for everything modified by human

skill; while nature shall mean the world as we find it, its objects unchanged by man. I am now to contend that in this broad sense, art is superior to nature, that it is greater than nature, better, finer, superior in every way.

‘It seems to me, honorable judges, that stated in this way the affirmative must surely win. I really felt sorry for Morton when I saw how it was going to work out; how little he has left, for you see art includes everything that man has done; everything that has been modified by skill to answer a purpose intended is art, illustrates art. All this is on my side. But my opponent seemed entirely cheerful about it, so I do not know what he is thinking about; but for fear he has something up his sleeve, as the saying is, I am going to explain a little further.

‘In the first place, honorable judges, ladies, and gentlemen, art gives us all those tools by which we make use of nature, dominate over it, master and control it. I emphasize this because I think this will settle the question. When I load a wagon, I always like to get the bulk of the load in front; it draws easier; so I want to put the weight of my argument right before you first thing. Nature does not give us tools, and tools make the difference between civilization and savagery. Nature would give us a cave in the rocks, the shadow of a tree; art gives us the axe, the saw, tools. This building, every structure we use, is a work of art. Everything about us, everything nearly that we do, shows how art is superior to nature, is the master of nature.

‘Suppose we start with some of the forces of nature which through use of tools we can control. The wind, for example, is a great force. We do not use it here, but we ought to. Squire Marks says it is not steady

enough. But we read in all the schoolbooks how the men of Holland set the wind to work; art is master of the wind. Down at the saw-mill the river is stopped by a dam until it saws all our lumber; at another place it may grind our flour; art is master of the river. Lightning is, I think, the most powerful thing in nature; but art sets up a rod of metal and the powerful stroke from the sky comes sliding down with no more damage than comes from falling rain that rushes down the roof. But more yet. It is a kind of tame lightning, as I am told, that runs on the telegraph wires and goes faster than time itself, faster than even time in a schoolboy's vacation; for, as the saying is, the message from New York reaches Burlington an hour before it starts. This is art, art triumphing over nature.

'In fact, honorable judges, is it not plain that civilization is art, that nature is savagery? The Indians have no art; they live in a state of nature; is not art much superior to nature?'

This interrogation was met by great applause in which everybody in the house seemed to participate. The president rapped for order, and when quiet was restored, the debater went on.

'Now, honorable judges, allow me to say that art modifies the living things of the world quite as well as these I have discussed. Take, for example, the animals. The more docile animals we train to use, to help us manage our heavy tools — our wagons, our plows, our harrows. The fiercer animals we destroy, art affording us weapons or tools also for this purpose. But among the plants see what art has done. The fine yellow ears we raise are the result of the skill, the art of the farmers of long ago. Mr. Lyon tells me that along the Illinois

River farmers make a business of raising big corn; he brings seed every spring, as we know, so that we may get big crops of corn in Iowa. I suppose the same thing is true of wheat, but do not know much about that.

‘But how about fruit? Will my opponent say that he prefers wild fruit unmodified by the art of man? Would he turn away from a fine rambo or a juicy big bellflower, to break his front teeth on a wild crab apple? I trow not!’

The speaker was here interrupted by applause; anything approaching a personal reference seeming to rouse the enthusiasm of an audience naturally partial to personal controversy, as more in keeping with every-day experience. The president used his gavel.

William, however, was not disconcerted. He had evidently studied his subject very carefully and with the aid of all his friends who could at all assist. He continued:

‘If we find art better in fruit, it is the same in flowers. Wild flowers are very beautiful, but even so, art makes them better! The cultivated rose is double, as we say, and Mr. Mitchell tells me that there are all kinds and colors of double roses, and that anyone who had ever seen the flowers in English gardens would realize what art has done in flowers. We, of course, can not judge much from experience since we have no cultivated flowers to speak of, but Mr. Snyder’s garden of Pennsylvania flowers is worth studying in this connection.

‘But, honorable judges, as my time is short, I leave all this, to say a few words concerning what people usually think of, when anybody mentions art; I mean pictures, statues, and things of that kind, for here also I think I can show that art is superior to nature.

‘The painting of pictures and the carving of marble are somewhat alike, since they attempt to show natural objects, and it is only necessary to compare the picture with the object to see which is superior.

‘Now I admit I never saw a painting or a statue! Neither did I ever see Webster or Clay; but I think I know something about these men just the same; I form my opinion from what I read. I once saw an engraving said to represent in part, Angelo’s painting, the creation of man. At one side a man lies extended upon some far-projecting cliff; on the other side appears no more than the withdrawal of the Creator’s hand. That tells the story. Man alone upon the naked rock; the Creator impossible for representation. “Ye have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape”; but that withdrawing hand indicates the fact of man’s origin as due to some power outside the world.

‘That illustrates what I understand in this higher sense. It is a method of giving expression to that which nature does not, can not show, or tell. Art is, therefore, a superior form of speech, voicing things otherwise unuttered, unexpressed.

‘Take in the art of music another illustration of this last assertion. My opponent is just as fond of music as am I, and knows as do you all, I hope, just what I mean. I mean that the art of music delights men not only because of its melodies, harmonies, and sweet sounds, but because it can and often does interpret feelings not otherwise easily indicated or set forth. I say music delights people. I submit that more people are moved by music than by anything that nature brings them, admitting that nature is fine. As showing how music impresses men, what gratitude it stirs in men, I

relate what Mr. McQ has told me about a musician who recently died in Europe. His name was Schumann and he wrote the music for songs; wonderful music, probably none better. Men planted forget-me-nots on his grave and established a perpetual fund in the old city where he sleeps, simply to keep these flowers forever blooming there. Now nothing in nature that I ever heard has awakened anywhere in any man a sentiment like that.

‘I have just one argument more. “Art is long, but time is fleeting” is an old saying which I take to mean that art endures while nature forever changes; dies and comes again, but not the same. Professor Cowles says the Greek marbles are more beautiful than any men or women that ever lived because, as he says, they are ideal; they represent what the face ought to be, what the hand ought to be, and so art actually improves on nature, is superior to nature. Moreover, this ideal once carved in stone endures for thousands of years while the most beautiful natural forms, like the flowers of the prairie, bloom just long enough to show their splendor, then wither and are gone.

‘The faces and forms of men endure a little longer, but as we all too sadly know, these too fade and utterly disappear. Only as the artist conserves them on canvass or in stone do they endure or in any wise continue.

‘And so, honorable judges, ladies, *and* gentlemen, I think I have proved my side of this argument. I have shown you that art is responsible for all our machines and tools, that these make us masters of the world, that in this sense art is superior to nature. Art makes the difference even between wild and cultivated flowers, fruits, and grains, in short, between civilization and

savagery. I have shown you that in the more refined forms of art, in those forms called for distinction the fine arts, in painting and in sculpture, art surpasses nature and is, therefore, superior because expressing what nature can not reveal, and giving to all beauty abiding quality, endurance; and so I leave the question to your kind consideration.'

Had 'our enterprising reporter' been 'on the ground' there had doubtless been left for us adequate report of what immediately followed; but such an artist had not yet risen upon our prairie culture. In lieu of his florid phrases, we have but the memory of an aged man who simply testifies 'the applause was prodigious and long-continued.' He further states that the speech showed careful, as if *collegiate*, preparation, and was delivered without a hitch, and in manner quiet, but convincing.

XXV

THE LYCEUM : SOMETHING ELSE

DURING the disturbance following Mr. Ramsgate's speech, the 'applause prodigious' shared in by those outside the house and by these longer continued, wise Mr. Snyder proceeded with deft but we judge somewhat callous finger and thumb to snuff the numerous candles fixed with tin reflectors along the walls. These primitive units of luminosity were at this particular moment far from illustrating the measure of radiation now familiar where arc and glowing filament multiply 'candlepower', but smoking and guttering in extravagant wastefulness they threatened, nay sometimes effected, abundant deposits of plain beef tallow on desk or floor immediately below.

As Mr. Leslie, obedient to the call of the president, now approached the speaker's place, there was the usual expression of welcome; but more pleasing by far was the sudden smile that spread instantly across the house to greet the glance of a pair of clear blue eyes.

'Mr. President, honorable judges, ladies, and gentlemen: My opponent has certainly stated his case with remarkable skill, and has, no doubt, left in your minds an impression, fleeting, I hope, that there is for me and my side of this question nothing at all to say. I do accept his definition of the question and were I to accept his application of the definition, there would be no more to say; but I shall not do that; far from it. For if I accept his view of the case, art is everything that

makes for civilization; nature means savagery: civilization is better than savagery and there's the end of it.

'But, honorable judges, that is not a fair presentation of the question; not at all. I did not come here to plead for savagery as against civilization; that is nonsense. I am here to show that art at its very best, and all our art and arts, is not superior to nature, but inferior, far inferior in every sense and meaning.

'The trouble with my opponent is that he ignores nature altogether. He evidently never thought of nature at all. He talks about tools; but what are tools? Simply supplements to the human hand! That hand has made every one of them, and is the greatest tool of them all — the greatest tool in the world — makes art, creates art, is the agent in all we do. But the hand is nature, a gift to man from nature, and since every tool designed by art is subordinate to the hand that made it, art as expressed in tools, at least, is not superior to its creator.

'No wonder the artist in the wonderful picture mentioned by my friend thought fitting to represent the Creator by a hand: that artist knew what he was about, he knew the meaning of the hand, the natural, beautiful, wonderful human hand! That picture does not make for my friend's argument at all; it makes for me!*

'And how about wings, those hands stretched out to rule the world of air? Here's a tool of nature's making. Can art even dream of that? Why, Mr. President, did my opponent ever see a troop of wild geese in the sky in spring? There they go, marshalled in perfect order, thousands of feet above the earth, moving, mov-

* In the poor wood-cut the debaters had seen, the full concept of Michelangelo was not shown! To this degree the boy's concept surpassed that of the great artist; for Michelangelo, as for millions still, religion was based chiefly on parade and make-believe; the Creator, even in the great window of Cologne, a great bearded man!

ing, with those wonderful rowing oars — men call them wings — in glorious beauty silently sailing the upper main! Could any man look at a spectacle like that and then talk of tools to show poor human art superior to nature?

‘My friend sings the glory of tools — the three R’s, the rifle, the railroad, and the reaper — I sing the glory of the human hand. My friend thinks tools bring civilization. I think civilization brings tools, tools shaped by the clever hand guided by an awakened brain.

‘But my opponent says that art is superior to nature because by art and its devices we are masters of nature. Since when is man master of nature, I’d like to know? The world will surely soon be different if that is so; but as yet, I see no sign of change.

‘To prove his contention, my friend cites examples; the wind, for instance. He says art builds a windmill and the windmill controls the wind. Was ever anything heard of like that? Why man alive, it is the wind controls the windmill! If art is master of the wind, where was art when the storm, a few years since, struck southern Ohio, struck Indiana? Where is art when the wind upsets our trees, our stacks, our houses even? Art superior to the wind? I wish it were. But not content with the wind, he goes on to say that art is superior to the moving waters, to the lightning even. But my opponent is mistaken in every case. It is true we use the wind, electricity, and moving water; but that does not mean mastery; far from that; it means coöperation.

‘When you ride a short distance on the farmer’s wagon, are you master of the farmer because he is going your way? Not at all. The farmer still performs the errand on which he set out, stops when he pleases,

or goes on when you get out. Now just so it is with the river. In the first place, we float upon the river as far as we like, going down-stream; going up-stream we not only do not master the river but its own mastery appears, inasmuch as only our utmost exertions enable us to make progress at all, not by stopping the river, oh no! but by exerting as much power as the river and *some more* in our effort to push along. We are not masters of the stream: we coöperate with it. Its floods will still be flowing, I am sure, when all our civilization is forgotten.

‘But my opponent cites the water-power at the mills at Millersburg. Surely art is superior to nature here. But is it? Again we coöperate. We put a dam in the way of the stream, but we are careful to provide another way for its rushing current; if we did not, it would destroy us. We by our art use the weight of the falling water; we can not by all our art make it less or more, not by a single ounce!

‘The argument as illustrated by the case of electricity is much the same. We know a little about the electric fluid so-called. We have learned that it travels more easily on or in metal than in other substances. Given two paths, it chooses the easier. Hence the telegraph wire and the lightning-rod. We set up an iron rod to protect our houses. We make a path for the lightning as we make a straight course for a stream, and lightning and stream obedient to their own laws follow the path, the course. A stroke of lightning last summer smashed to pieces the giant boulder in Wilson’s meadow. Does my opponent imagine that a lightning-rod there would have reduced the force of that fearful blow? Not for one single instant! We have indeed prepared “a path

for the lightning of the thunder'', but we take care to keep ourselves and our valuables out of the road of the lightning!

'Is it not a fact, honorable judges, that we try to understand the laws of electricity, of water, of nature; and when, in our devices, we obey these it is well with us. Which, then, is superior, nature the law-giver, or art obedient to the law? I leave you to decide.

'But my opponent has yet another class of facts to show the superiority of art over nature, namely the perfection of grains and fruit as the outcome of human skill and cites me to a liking of wild crabs as above rambos and bellflowers.

'Now I think my friend will admit that while the wild crab is not the best eating, it smells good! Besides there are some other wild-fruits that he did not name. He did not name wild strawberries, globules of pure flavor to which no fruit in cultivation makes the least approach. Nor did he once say wild plum in the whole argument; yet every man and woman here knows the golden spheres and spheroids which make our autumn thickets glow with beauty, and as they ripen, fairly drip with sweetness. Nor did he name the Catawba grapes which experts say are fine as any in Europe. Why did he not offer me some of these plain Iowa fruits instead of that crab apple? I think it was unkind of him, very unkind, and William is a generous boy, too; I thought more of him than that!'

This, of course, amused the crowd. Crab apples on the prairie were not without use. In that almost fruitless time, had not our housekeepers learned many a way to make even the gnarly crab yield its rich flavor — for flavor it has, even as quinces — to many a toothsome

but far-forgotten delicacy. The audience gave Leslie his only applause, but he kept bravely on:

‘I’ll tell you why he did not mention these other fruits, not so much that he wanted to leave me with a crab apple, no, no, but because he did not care to have this audience remember that nature herself can make fruits, the very finest in the world!

‘Apples are very old fruit, I learn. All the apples we name are but varieties of some ancient apple, maybe the one that Eve found in the garden, maybe far better than even rambos. At any rate, apples and grains, like plums and strawberries, are originally gifts of nature; the part which art plays in the case is small.

‘There remains but one more part of my opponent’s argument to be considered. His argument for the fine arts was strong and fine, and in what he said everyone will probably concur. The fine arts even to think about are glorious. Painting, sculpture, music, eloquence, poetry, these are the finest things we know, because they stand for the best arrangement of the finest thoughts we have. For such things my friend and I share in a mutual love and admiration. My friend well describes these things as not only admirable, as if gathering in themselves all of perfection that we know, but as enduring, permanent, far outlasting the cruder things for which they stand, which lent them inspiration. And yet, these also are of nature, not only in their substance, the physical basis on which they rest, supplying form and figure, but more — of the spirit of man are all these things, for had they never risen in thought, surely never had they worn the harmony, form, and grace of beauty which we all admire. But of nature also is man, and the spirit of him in this marvelous world! Through man

art springs from nature; it is part and parcel of her bloom; but it is hers!

‘Hence it is that art endures, is “long”. Its forms and fashions vanish; its paintings and marbles sink in dust; even literature may be forgotten, perennial only as forever renewed in the thoughts and speech of men; but the spirit that conceives, the spirit that understands, the spirit that dwells in art is greater than all; it shall not perish until nature perish, till earth and heaven flee away!

‘I admit that I love nature, I love her as did Scotland’s peasant poet; I love even the loose soil as it falls in mellow cataracts behind my plow; I love the prairie; I love its rising verdure sweet with the perfume of vernal showers; I love the glorious harvest on summer’s golden field, and so the “mellow fruitfulness” of the later year; I love the white sheen of winter, and from my cabin window cozy I smile at the impotence of the storm; I love the earth, my home: all this I somewhat comprehend, all this I love. But when I look farther, when the wider nature that we call the universe begins to rise about me, the splendor of the nightly sky, the unmeasured fields where constellations rise and sink forever in their strange but ceaseless errands, changeless where all is change, when I dream of the tremendous force with which in silent swiftness the panorama moves, then am I lost, overwhelmed by the spectacle stupendous!

‘The scheme, even as we see it, is too great, too vast by far, not only for the single soul, but for any single art we know. Hence many arts. Eloquence may tell of part of nature’s wonders, poetry may attempt her splendors, music in its own way may strive to utter bits

of her subtle harmonies, painting may catch her colors and fix them here and there in combinations that suggest, remind of something we have seen, architecture using nature's own materials may imitate the walls and pinnacles of God's eternal masonry as children build palaces of sand; but all the eloquence, the poetry, the beauty, the inconceivable majesty, dignity, glory of the natural world *once perceived* falls upon all our art, all our imitative efforts to portray, as sunlight falls on tinsel and tawdry taper-flame once the procession emerges from the portals of some gloom-filled church.

'Friends, honorable judges, I plow the field, Mr. Simpson puts in my hand dry grains of yellow corn selected by busy farmers in all past years! I put the kernels in the soil, tread the soft earth with my clumsy foot, and go my way. And then, nature does her part; one hundred, five hundred-fold! Honorable judges, which is to be called superior, art or nature? I leave you to decide.'

The applause following Mr. Leslie's speech was not so vigorous as before, although William led it and the McQ's and Mr. Lyon did their best, but it was sufficient; and then the room fell silent waiting the action of the judges, while Mr. Snyder again improved the lights.

But the judges were deliberate. They even conferred, court in banc, and still the people were quiet. But when at length the president rose to announce 'two for the affirmative', he was not allowed to finish the report — such was the enthusiasm with which the little audience cheered. Outside some whistled and some shouted 'crab apple'; but Mr. Snyder lighted the fire already prepared, but unnoticed.

Morton and William congratulated each the other, while each was congratulated by everybody else, and

the little log palace saw never a half-hour of greater merriment and genuine satisfaction. Brother McQ and Hosea Ramsgate sang *Larboard Watch Ahoy!* novelty in the world of music that day, and on the prairie unheard before.

During the days immediately following the debate just recorded, art and nature as may be imagined received no small consideration on the porch and in the homes of our prairie people. Had not Father Blew, when asked, pronounced the discussion fine: the best he had heard at the lyceum, on any subject not political.

‘The young gentlemen showed their training; they really came near talking about the same question; they left me with the impression that while art may be very convenient, nature is somehow also very necessary!’

With such high commendation those who had not been present were keen to know, while those who had heard it all, wished they could remember, but were anyway perfectly willing to tell. Squire Marks thought that some topic other than politics was fortunate after our late, sad history; he thought had there been four judges, honors might have been even; he never did like odd numbers anyway, and had long pondered a numerical system in which there should be none.

Mrs. Baird said nothing; there were tears in her eyes, when Miss Blew called to see her, though what she said is not reported. Miss Simpson noticed that Mr. Hallaway, the new president, did not have his ‘specs’ on when he read the decision of the judges!

But Mrs. Ramsgate — it is not intended to report here all that that good lady said to Miss Blew on her usual Saturday afternoon call.

‘Of course, I’m pleased, Miss Blew, and I have no

intention to displease anybody, but as you know I did not like the way it started out with those judges, and then Dr. Willowbush, of all things! We all know when we get a doctor the prognostic is never good; and I must say I felt pretty uneasy when I heard Morton go on as he did about nature; I never did hear such granditure since I heard Pap's preacher brother at a funeral: but I've just been wondering which judge it was that voted for Leslie; I hear all three of them claimed it; but it all turned out better than I expected, as Shorty Bracket said when the horse throwed him and he landed in the strawstack.

'That Morton is a fine young fellow, Miss Blew; he is over at our house right now, I reckon; I left him there, him and William going over it all and laughing as if it was the biggest joke, and I guess it was.'

'That was a good debate', said Miss Blew, 'and I do not think the boys considered it a joke, although they may be inclined to laugh just now.'

'There's William right now', said his mother, as that young gentleman appeared at the door to say that Mrs. Stillmore waited to see her at the house. He tarried only long enough to receive his neighbor's friendly congratulations.

The soft brightness of autumn lay everywhere that afternoon upon the white, glistening fields where dry leaves sang their finished work over a thousand pendent ears of yellow corn.

'Nature surely has it to-day', said William, 'Morton and I agree! Only the judges seemed to differ: I don't know why they picked on me.'

XXVI

DEBATES THERE WERE : THE AFFIRMATIVE

It was an exciting summer on the prairie that 'summer of '56', one to which men long referred. What with new railways and new people in a new land, there was interest enough, to say nothing of the fact that we had presidential nominations, and ultimately elections, with all sorts of disputes and discussions in between. Fillmore clubs there were, anti-Masons, Know-nothings, and above all, the rising ambitions of the 'Pathfinder' and his friends.

Worse than all, while soft summer winds blow from south and west, what cries are these from far-off Kansas? Flower bedecked valley of the Kaw, blood-stained by civil strife; Lawrence, young city white upon the hill, blackened by the fires of war; our free-state men robbed, outraged, and slain by ruffians of the border; innocent men murdered by Brown, a man with whom we once had sympathy. Nay; did not some of our own prairie people live in Ossawatimie? Where are they now? Exciting days were those of '56!

Small wonder that men on the porch and in the field spoke oft and loud. The legislation of '54 which should be 'final', end all our factional troubles, had brought us admittedly to the verge of civil war instead; democracy vanished where only the army of the United States could keep the peace. The attitude of Mr. Dennis toward political compromise grew in favor; that of the Squire fell into proportionate disesteem.

Father Blew sometimes uttered a word of warning;

Philo Morris mildly thought that it was the ideal of democracy to settle things without war. 'Argue as much as you please, but be patient. You can't talk the briars off blackberries.'

Mr. Dennis was outspoken in his unbridled wrath; was unhappy all his waking hours; could scarce attend to business. Equally anxious for the immediate future, his rival went on husking corn; too poor to hire a helper.

When once Mr. Ramsgate ventured the opinion that only a revival of religion could save us, the Squire replied:

'Not now; already our politics are tinged with religious bitterness, from New England to New Orleans, the Bible quoted on both sides. Religious excitement has more than once availed to foment war, seldom for its restraint; some day, perhaps, not yet; not yet!'

It had become generally known for some time that the Squire had challenged Mr. Dennis to debate the whole compromise question; but during the early fall while the matter appeared a political issue, the rules of the lyceum forbade. After the election, however, when all parties had formally accepted the *status quo*, Mr. Buchanan safely elected and Congress with him, there seemed less reason why our two leaders might not discuss a question no longer of partisan concern.

Since the Squire gave the challenge, it fell to his opponent to formulate the terms of statement. No one, accordingly, was much surprised when not long after the elections, our secretary announced as the theme of debate for Friday evening, the question of political compromise stated positively — 'Resolved: That the policy of compromise is essential in the progress of free government!' The affirmative will be maintained by Mr.

Ezra Marks; the negative by Mr. Henry Clay Dennis. The judges so far selected are Brother McQ and Mr. John Unthank. Mr. Unthank is loaned to us for this occasion by Mahaska County.'

Friday came round with rain. Small difference to our men-folk a little rain could make; was not the school-house always dry and warm? But to-night men make up our audience; our little secretary was in her now accustomed place, by courteous assistance of Morton Leslie, as was believed; Miss Simpson also appeared, to the honor of Mr. William Ramsgate at nearly the same moment; and Mrs. Lyon and Mrs. Marks sat side by side. The one great policy, thus far, of the Republic shall be defended and decried and only men shall listen—and forget! The president spoke:

'The argument for the affirmative will be made by Mr. Ezra Marks as announced.'

That gentleman rose and moved slowly to the front, and to the usual place beside the president. He was very sedate and very quiet and on this occasion a pair of steel-bowed, blue-rimmed spectacles lent added gravity and poise.

'Mr. President, judges, ladies, and gentlemen', he began, 'a compromise is simply a concession; a yielding on one side or the other, presumably on both sides; the adoption of a middle ground between extreme opinions honestly held, as to what is wise or proper in a given case.'

'A policy is a general plan of procedure or course of conduct. A free government is one in which the people have at least some part of the management of their own public affairs; and I am to show that in the development, or progress, of such a government, a policy of

compromise is essential. By consent of my opponent, this debate will in general be confined to the history of English-speaking people. There is not time here to go very far even into this. I propose to establish my position by reference to some of the compromises that history records, especially to those of our own history on this side of the sea. I shall try to show that compromise has been in every case advantageous; and finally, I may present reasons why no other course is more likely to be serviceable in the future.

‘The first compromise to which I make appeal is that which gave to England and to all English-speaking men the Magna Charta. The circumstances are perhaps not so well known as they ought to be, so in fewest words, I may tell the story.

‘About six hundred and forty years ago, England was in the hands of the notorious King John, one of the most foolish kings that ever occupied a throne. He was despotic and tyrannical to such a degree that the Pope, who was general superintendent of kings in those days, turned him out of office, “deposed him”, they said, and gave England to the King of France. When the French king appeared and seemed likely to take possession, John made haste to make peace with His Holiness by abject surrender, and actually as a tenant took his kingdom back again, agreeing to pay rent for it! But even as tenant, he was still a tyrant and a fool. The English people rebelled; but instead of killing the tyrant to find the same oppression from his son, they compromised with him. They agreed that if he would give them written acknowledgment of their plain rights binding himself and his heirs forever, he might play king and Pope’s man as long as he pleased. The King

signed the charter and gave bonds. What were these rights? Two only I mention: no tax without law; no damage to any man in person, property, or estate, without compensation or his consent, unless "by the lawful judgment of his peers or the law of the land." These fundamental principles of freedom are enumerated in every bill of rights in America, nay in the Constitution itself, generally in the very words of that old compromise of Runnymede.

'Now the recognition and proclamation of these obvious, simple rights of every freeman are so familiar to us that we forget their origin and think of them perhaps as having their beginnings far remote, old as human speech, so natural they seem; but, in fact, they found their first clear, definite expression in the compromise of 640 years ago, the beginnings of free government among English-speaking men. John, of course, did not keep his part of the bargain, neither did the Pope; the people had to wait another fifty years for parliament, and four hundred years for Cromwell; but they have been winning all the time in safety, fundamental principles never once forgotten.

'In all legislative action in this country, compromise is common, but only as it appears in connection with slavery do we notice it; not always even there. People from Ohio and Illinois boast of the Northwest Ordinance and its prohibition of slavery, and they do well; but if they once read the sixth article of that document, they will discover that the boasted prohibition is not direct and absolute, but is coupled with nothing other than a fugitive slave law. And yet, I think that no one will dispute that the Northwest Ordinance by building a solid rank of free States north of the Ohio River has con-

tributed in greatest fashion to the progress of free institutions everywhere. That prohibition is, in the very terms of it, one side of a compromise. Read it!' The speaker stopped and read.

'But the first great compromise with which we may concern ourselves to-night appears in our own national Constitution. It also concerns human slavery, and I am to show, if I can, that notwithstanding all the mischief which that compromise has brought us in these seventy years, even the slavery compromises of our organic law have not been without advantage in the up-building of free institutions, free government among men.

'The record of the Philadelphia Convention, as preserved by James Madison and only recently published, as we all know, is certainly a wonderful, a beautiful story. There is nothing like it in the world. Here are seen a small company of most able, earnest men, entered upon a most momentous task in a crisis of the history, not of their own country only, but of the world — *and they know it!*

'As we read we seem to feel the awe which broods about their solemn deliberations; we see the silent Washington seated in the place of honor, while about the room, such men as Alexander Hamilton, Roger Sherman, Gouverneur Morris, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, John Rutledge, move and speak. I repeat; in my opinion there is not such another record in the annals of mankind! I've been in that room many a time! In fancy I've walked with great men there!

'From Madison's book we may learn two or three things necessary for us to remember, honorable judges, as we go forward in this debate.

'The first is that the country for which these men

thought and planned was face to face with limitless confusion, anarchy of which Shay's rebellion was but a symptom. Relief was needed, and that immediately.

'A second thing to remember is that in a country so large as that for which the Constitution-builders were called to act, divergent interests were almost innumerable; only the most frank and generous consideration by each man for the situation of his neighbor could promise any possible hope of success. Slavery was indeed a problem, but there were others: questions of politics, commerce, large States against small. Such questions made compromise possible and inevitable. The Union under the Constitution, a strong federated government that should endure—this was the prize men sought; compromise was the price. The only question this evening, honorable judges, is, was the prize worth the price? If so—and who doubts it?—the compromise is justified and was in that instance essential to the progress of free government.

'Of the questions named, that affecting slavery has so cast all other questions into the background that we forget them. The terms were wrong, we say, because slavery is so outrageous. At that time, however, the future was not foreseen, and the bargain seemed not so black as now. Indeed it was common belief that the institution was in the way of gradual extinction; this was so in all the northern States, and public sentiment was reflected in the Ordinance of 1787. My study of the situation leads me to believe that such men as Washington, Franklin, Morris, Madison, and Hamilton did the only possible thing: they built the republic and left its misfts, here and there, to the wisdom of the future.

'But now, let us consider for a few minutes the great

political compromises with which we are all familiar, those of the last thirty-five years, all within the memory of some of the people in this room to-night, the great Missouri Compromise in its several phases.

‘Be it noted that between 1787 and 1820 the new republic flourished greatly. Its population had trebled, and by the Louisiana and later purchases, its territory had doubled. But the expectations of those opposed to the extension of slavery had not been realized. True, the larger part of the Northwest Territory, devoted to freedom by the act of the Continental Congress, had passed over into the form of independent States free from slavery, and Vermont had come in to join their progressive company; but the friends of slavery had been able to keep up with this by the organization of four slave States — Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky. In fact, it became the fashion, as we all know, to admit States in pairs, one north, one south, to preserve in so far a congressional balance, if such could be; a balance in the Senate anyway. Thus we have seen Missouri and Maine, and more recently Michigan and Arkansas, Iowa and Florida enter the Union.

‘What then was the famous Missouri Compromise of which we have heard so much and whose recent repeal has so roused the country?

‘In 1818 men opposed to extending slavery, while by no means satisfied with the situation, had yet remained rather quiet so long as the “peculiar institution” remained south of the celebrated Mason and Dixon’s line, but when, all of a sudden, the head of the viper appeared in the north, confronting the free State of Illinois, when, from the Louisiana Purchase, the Territory of Missouri asked the admission of a new slave State extended north

to the Des Moines River; when such a petition came up to Congress in 1818, friends of freedom awakened to danger and began most strenuous resistance. Does any man doubt that in 1820 opponents of slavery were less zealous for the welfare of the country, for freedom, than in 1787 or even now, let him study the recently published *Annals of the Sixteenth Congress*, especially at the closing hours of the session 1818-1819. Let him hear Cobb of Georgia demand slavery for Missouri with wild threatening of war, "a fire which all the waters of the ocean can not put out, which seas of blood can only extinguish"; let him hear New York Tallmadge, in reply, demand an end to slavery, an immediate end. "Now is the time! The extension of the evil must now be prevented, now or the opportunity will be lost forever!" Any man who reads such sentences may know that the Missouri Compromise came not because lovers of freedom lacked either zeal or courage.

'After nearly two years of continuous deadlock, the House voting for freedom, the Senate for slavery, it was finally agreed that Missouri might enter the Union with slavery; but that thereafter all the Louisiana Purchase north of the new State's *southern* border should be forever free.

'Now then, honorable judges, note the intention of this compromise. It made for the progress of free government because it saved the republic from the disaster and the doubtful chance of war, and afforded, as we now see, thirty years of peaceful development. It gave to freedom the larger share of the Louisiana strip, making Iowa free and all the vast territories from Missouri north and west; it gave opportunity for the development of new northern States, Michigan as against Arkansas,

Wisconsin for Texas, and Iowa for Florida. To the compromise of 1820 we who meet here this evening owe the absolute independence which is ours; we are as fortunate at least as though Iowa had been part and parcel of the Northwest Territory.

‘But one more compromise remains to be mentioned here to-night — that of 1850. This was necessitated by problems connected with the administration of the vast territories falling to the United States at the end of the Mexican War. These problems concerned the boundaries of the newly admitted slave State, Texas, the status of slavery in new territories, and other matters of administration. All these things might have been worked out in time; but no sooner had they risen, than new conditions rose; gold was discovered in California, and before men were aware of what was doing, California appeared in Congress with her own boundaries, her own constitution, a free constitution, asking admission as a State, and with the recommendation of the newly elected president! My opponent knows all about California; he was there!

‘By the combined efforts of patriotic men, led by Webster and Clay, a second compromise went into effect. Of its terms we are all aware and I shall not name them now. I may, however, say that with the exception of the fugitive slave law, which is sure to die a natural death, they all make for the progress of freedom. In California, we gained a magnificent republic joining Oregon on the north, almost the entire Pacific Coast and not a single slave! The bounds of Texas were much reduced, in the north withdrawn from 42° to 36° 30'. Only the remaining territories, impossible to slavery as Daniel Webster showed, were left open; the slave trade

was abolished in the District of Columbia; peace once more descended upon the halls of Congress, upon the great republic, and upon the homes of men.

‘But it is said that as a result of all these compromises the condition grows steadily worse: that we have civil war in Kansas; that the hearts of men are failing them for fear; and that the future looks dark indeed. But even so: shall men, therefore, cease to strive? Shall we cease to defend the Republic, to make it glorious? Who does not know that not the compromise, but the repeal of the compromise is responsible for our present sad disorder? I may not talk politics, so I shall not name him here, but I do think that the man whose political ambition dared to disturb the peace of 1852-1853 is guilty of a crime, because he has ruthlessly endangered the quiet of this nation and the liberties of mankind!’

This was spoken with great earnestness and in a most forceful way, and brought a murmur of genuine applause. The speaker seemed surprised, looked about, and then went on:

‘Honorable judges, I have perhaps already spoken too long. I must give my opponent a little chance: but I promised at the outset to say why, in my opinion, compromise is, and will be, necessary to the progress of free government among men. This will require but a single sentence. The reason lies in the fact that human judgment is fallible. We mortals do not always, all of us at any one time, know what *is* wise or right. Suppose the majority does, the minority does not; or the reverse may be true. At any rate, to be brief, a free government respects the rights of the minority and can progress only with the development of right public opinion. It must sometimes, and for a time, tolerate that which the

wisest know to be evil, until public sentiment reaches a stage that will without anarchy sweep the evil forth. Our lives are too short to solve the problems of time.

God's ways seem dark, but, soon or late,
They touch the shining hills of day;
The evil cannot brook delay,
The good can well afford to wait.
Ye have the future grand and great,
The safe appeal of Truth to Time.

Such a thing as a perfectly just and righteous, self-governed people exists not; may probably never exist, because the problem deals with the human nature of plain ordinary men. Our community is not ideal; not a dream-nation is ours, like Utopia or Atlantis or the City of the Sun; ours is a real nation, part and parcel of a real but sinning world; over which even the divine government has been successful only in a progressive way. There be many, no doubt, who really believe slavery a divine institution: it has been in the world so long. John C. Calhoun evidently so believed, astonishing as that seems to us plain people of the prairie; but I think Calhoun was conscientious. This is not apology: it is a bold statement of fact. We read: "He hath not dealt with *us* after our sins; nor rewarded *us* according to our iniquities. He has ever been merciful and forbearing, calling us to better things." And so with nations: in the happiest records of the past a spirit of forbearing patience, and temporary concession has not only not been wanting, but has never wholly missed a blessing; always has streamed forward, bearing to some better day more than the darkest hour has ever lost. Each crisis has lent our Republic new lease of life with ever increasing power until, as I now believe, her final triumph with freedom universal can not be far remote.'

XXVII

DEBATES THERE WERE : THE NEGATIVE

THE argument we have thus so briefly recorded was delivered in a really wonderful way. There was no elocution, no oratory, but from first to last there was not a hitch; no pause save when from the old ordinance the Squire read a line or two and once when, as we have seen, he was interrupted by slight applause. As he went on, he seemed as one entranced, as one who mused, as one who thought aloud. With uplifted finger, once and again, he emphasized his speech; his face turned toward his hearers, but he surely saw them not, so tense, so earnest, so absorbed was he.

Before resuming his seat, he stood for a moment silent, and his audience was silent too. His hearers knew not what to do. They had never listened to an argument like that, where all customary procedure was so plainly out of place. Even when the man had left the floor, they still sat silent. The window on each side had been removed, and one might hear outside the dripping rain; in the fireplace the flames rose and fell in peaceful murmur, but the audience stirred not, they were literally spell-bound!

Mr. Snyder first found himself and hastened to his self-appointed duty. This reminded Bracket, and that gentleman proceeded to stir the walnut logs, sending up the wide chimney-throat a shower of sparks that far above must have illumined for a few brief moments at least the all-engulfing blackness. Then the secretary

prompted the president, waiting he knew not what. He called for Mr. Dennis.

The audience, recovering itself, now went to the opposite extreme, applauded uproariously as the defender of the negative took the place of honor.

‘Mr. President and honorable judges: I accept of course my opponent’s definition of this question and am ready to discuss it in the phase which he has chosen to present. He has evidently thought best to select for compromise illustrations than which none offer less to commend. As he debates the question, he invites me to do my worst. I think this should be noticed. Some compromises, even in the progress of free government, are more weighty, more far-reaching than others. Who reads Madison soon discovers that in a broad sense the Constitution is full of compromises, of changes, opposition. The question in such cases was not of principle, of morals, of honor, or freedom, but simply of convenience, of expediency. Such the Squire wisely passes by. The extremely interesting discussions and conclusions centering about the executive, the supreme court, the disparity of States large and small — the Squire has ignored these and generously limits the discussion to those critical, vital matters which divided men and as compromises are notorious in the story of English-speaking men. He has done well, for unless he win with these he loses the question.

‘With this concession to my opponent’s shrewdness and courage, Mr. President, I beg also to say that I think he has made the best of a very bad bargain. The very word compromise, in this country at least, has come to have a bad sound; so bad, as the Squire well knows, that a man can hardly use it at all in any connection without

compromising himself! I despise the word, the very word. Not only has it a bad sound, but it tastes bad, it smells bad! Douglas says compromise is dead and buried; he ought to know, for not only was he the doctor, but on the hearse he sat beside the undertaker!’

This introduction so captured his hearers that only the most urgent action of the president, thoroughly awakened now, availed to restore quiet. Evidently, people were at last getting what they came to hear. Mr. Dennis had not the personal popularity of the genial Squire; but for once he was on the popular side. He went on:

‘My opponent argues that compromise is of service in a free government. Not only that; he argues that it is essential! Now I dispute the latter point especially, but I deny the first as well. I maintain not only that compromise is not essential, not only that it is of no service, but I insist that it is, always has been, and always must be, an unmitigated nuisance in all governmental affairs!’

At this the audience began a new demonstration, only to be told by the president that no farther applauding would be tolerated until the speaker finished his argument.

‘I insist’, said Mr. Dennis, ‘I insist that in this discussion, a compromise is simply a concession, a yielding on one side or other, or sometimes on both sides, to what one party or the other, or sometimes both, know or believe to be morally, if not absolutely, wrong! I do not deny that there may be an honest difference of opinion, but in my judgment, any kind of a compromise is wrong to begin with, wrong in principle, and is, therefore, sure also to be wrong in the outcome, not to be tolerated at

all! If any man or any set of men know what is right and bargain with others of different opinion to do wrong, they simply become *particeps criminis*, partakers in *crime*. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is *sin*!" The principle is wrong; you recognize an evil, and, as you see, are guilty of another evil when you tolerate the first.

'So much for my opponent's theory; but that is not all; the practice is just as bad as the policy, and all experience shows it.

'It can not be otherwise, for compromise settles nothing; as every politician knows, it simply is postpone-ment. By compromise the plain people are misled. They are told that the country rests; that we have peace, when there is no peace. Its terms are vague, its promises unreal and of no avail. It is an engagement-ring made of brass; spectacles on the eyes of the blind; lily-white on the cheeks of a lady of color; a delusion that changes nothing, and like every other deception ends only in disappointment and despair! I'm from Kentucky. In Kentucky when we have a difficulty, we do not postpone; we settle it then and there, and it generally stays settled; it is even buried sometimes, as Stephen A. would say.

'I come now to the second count in my indictment, for, honorable judges, I am to-night bringing the whole policy of compromise before the grand jury for indictment, for speedy trial, and I hope for conviction and abolition forever and forevermore!

'I say, then, in the second place, the policy of compromise is condemned in practice because it not only does not settle a fight, but it actually continues it; virtually perpetuates it; the battle is forever threatening.

Like a covered fire, it is likely to break out when least expected and to set all the bells clanging in the middle of the night. The famous Missouri Compromise which should save the country blazed up in the very next session of Congress, and all winter long all the genius of "Kentucky's favorite son" was spent in the effort to damp down again that unholy blaze!

'And so the fire smoked and smouldered again for thirty years, not by any means without up-flares, until anger ruled the hearts of men, until even far-off Oregon could not be organized as a territory, a territory even, without a slavery quarrel, fierce and long; and California, free as the untrammelled rivers of her far-stretched mountains, California, hating slavery as she hates the devil, was refused admission until a new compromise could be patched up which should once more fasten the sacred institution upon a despairing people.

'The fact is, Mr. President, we are all the time doing what we know to be wrong, for the sake of some great good expected, for good-will, for peace. It is the outworn doctrine of some religionists that it is right to do evil that good may come. But whenever you do a thing like that, you destroy at once all clearness of vision; you weaken every moral judgment; you make all conduct a matter of expediency. The tone of society is gone. Who ever heard of a man fighting, or willing to fight for a compromise? Are our men in Kansas fighting for a half-way settlement; that the glorious prairie shall be half-way free; that a man shall wear shackles on one hand only? What freeman ever dreamed of folly such as that? We boast of our liberty as God-given on a par with life; there can be no compromise there — no compromise between the quick and the dead! And so

a man is either free or he is not free; he is honest or he is dishonest; he is alive or he is dead! All else is sheer pretense!

‘I must confess, honorable judges, I can not endure the situation. I can not with any patience meet the argument of my friend on the other side. What in Heaven’s name have we got for all our concessions? When I think of an institution, a system of bondage not immoral only and inhuman, but so damnable in every way as to be indescribable, unspeakable; when I think of such a thing fastened at the very start in the constitution of a government intended to be free, fixed by a compromise enduring so that we can’t get it out; when I think of another compromise that not only did not remove the first, but actually strengthened it, handed over to its awful barbarism another great and beautiful section of this valley, right on the borders of the prairie where we live — the sons and daughters of Iowa to hear the screams and groans of human beings tortured by their fellowmen — when I think of yet a third piece of legislation called a compromise which seals that bondage and compels you and me to honor it, and to dishonor ourselves, to refuse a morsel of bread to the poor wretch who escapes his chains; and when to-day Stephen A. Douglas comes along and turns over to slavery or freedom as political trickery may determine, the remnant which freedom vainly imagined she had bought by all these compromises — when I think of all these things, I lose patience altogether; I can not endure it; I can not argue the question at all! I am for fight! I hear the cry of the helpless, whether in Carolina or in Kansas, and I am for fight! For battle, until the outrage, whether in the Constitution or out, shall be forever

swept away; by peaceable means, if possible, but by any means and every means until slavery is banished from the country if not driven from the world!’

It must be recorded that Mr. Dennis’s speech at no time lacked evidence of sincerity; his manner was sometimes energetic in the extreme. Especially notable in delivery was this indictment. The tone of his voice became defiant, louder, and more loud; his face took on unwonted pallor; his eyes flashed, his every movement proclaimed his excitement, until the closing sentence was fairly shouted, and for gesture he brought down both his fists with a vehemence that startled his audience.

But applause there was none, although one of the Moss boys is said to have started it; but the people, perhaps disapproving after all the speaker’s vehemence, perhaps half-frightened, perhaps obedient to the president’s request, sat silent. As a matter of fact, the orator had gone too far, in that he had drawn attention to himself at the cost of his argument; he realized it almost instantly, stopped for a moment and then, quietly, in perfect self-control, began once more.

‘Strange enough, the Squire seeks in English history to find comfort for his theory. Of course, I knew when he defined the question that he intended something of the sort; I indeed agreed, but I did not think he would go back quite a thousand years.

‘However, a good many things have happened since 1215! If there is a sad story in western history, it is the story of England since the date he names. And why? Because the people have been all this time in bondage and are to this very day in bondage! Ask Brother McQ how much freedom, how much care of the people there is in the government of England. I grant

there is some slow progress there, but the centuries have waited for it, all because in what my opponent describes as compromise, Englishmen sold themselves to monarchy, to a set of kings all of whom were tyrants, despicable tyrants, up to the time when Cromwell used the ax. Since then they have been mostly fools! In either case the people have enjoyed all the blessings that do either accompany or flow from compromise: they have been completely helpless in the presence of almost every conceivable abuse. My friend refers to Kentucky: I am surprised that any man on this fine prairie should spend his force defending political compromise, but that a man from Philadelphia should do it is nothing other than amazing! Why, if the men of Philadelphia only two hundred years ago had been satisfied with compromise, how the history of Pennsylvania would have been changed! Surely some one else than the son of a Quaker had been found to support the affirmative here to-night. Cromwell made no compromises, and while he lived he made England great and free at home, great and dominant abroad. But in 1660, the old spirit of compromise brought back a Stuart king, and the uncompromising Quakers founded Philadelphia. Surely in this case at least, the restoration compromise can not be counted to England's gain. When the Stuarts petered out, actually wore out, ran out, the Dutch Georges took their place. One of these precious blockheads, as we all know, undertook to interfere with the freedom of the New England colonies. Samuel Adams answered with the Declaration; no compromise in Adams. Later, unfortunately, as I think, the Constitution was adopted, slavery-compromises and all, and here we are, two generations later, still facing ruin!

‘All the fine things that my opponent cares to say about the Constitution and the men who made it I willingly concede. As an outline for human government it is deservedly the admiration of the world. Only where its builders depart from its one high purpose, only where they compromise, yield to the claims of one special interest as against every and all other, only then is it weak; but then alas! how very weak! weak to helplessness; yea, perhaps weak even to its own ultimate dissolution!

‘The high purpose of the Constitution, its marvelous adaptation to the purpose, the symmetry, simplicity, strength, and clearness of its framework to which all the experience of thirty centuries made contribution — these have often brought to students suggestion of some noble piece of architecture, temple, palace, like our own beautiful capitol with marble halls and shining columns. How sad to think that in the face of all that architectural clearness and beauty, within its halls, right before its columns there yet is room not for royalty indeed, not for chivalry and knightly splendor, oh, not for these; but for the dire procession of the cowering slave, his chains clanking as he moves!

‘But Mr. President and judges, it is the compromise, not the Constitution, I attack to-night; the weakness I pursue and not the strength: not that which makes us a nation strong and free. Men call me an abolitionist, and possibly such I am, for, concerning slavery I have nothing else to say but that it shall cease to be! But to-night I am denouncing compromise as a policy, not because I am this or that, but because of its wrongness and general, worse-than-uselessness! Strange to say, from one direction my opponent little has suspected, my

argument receives singular support. Calhoun, John C. Calhoun* is on my side! Listen!

‘I am against any compromise line. . . . I see my way in the Constitution. I cannot in a compromise. . . . It gives us no security. But the Constitution is stable. It is a rock. . . .

Let us be done with compromises. Let us go back and stand upon the Constitution!

‘Calhoun refers, of course, to compromises since 1806; he forgot those of 1787. Yes, he forgot these, giving the south Congressmen for negroes as men, but compelling us to return them as runaway horses, once they escape bondage. Yes, I think the great nullifier forgot these, and no wonder! In my judgment they ought to be forgotten, they ought to pass forever from the memory of Americans; they are in the Constitution but are not of it; they are foreign to its genius, entirely foreign, like to most of the amendments since tacked on, but Calhoun says the Constitution is a rock!

‘Yes, gentlemen, the Constitution itself may well be likened to a rock; but those black compromises are anything but rock; mere sand are they — make-shifts, never set for permanence because unrighteous and unjust; shoals which the biting of the tireless sea is sure presently to sweep away. I myself care not how soon, if only it be forever!

‘But, Mr. President and judges, there is one more weak point in my friend’s position here to-night — that word essential. Had he said probable, incidental, or even concomitant, he might have maintained the affirmative as historic truth; but *essential* — in my opinion — never! Read rightly, as I might show, history shows the progress of free government as constant in this

* Speech in the Senate, February 19, 1847.

world. Like a mountain stream hidden betimes for awhile, burdened with difficulty, held fast by bars and bands, we think it lost. It may even be turned aside, caught in some compromising, stagnant marsh or swamp; but in either case how fine it comes forth anew, to pass in beauty down the plain. If not, it simply flies sunward, returns to its lofty origin, its mountain peaks, to start, to stream again in freedom, as if to reach the far-off kindred sea. The accident of selfish greed has often smothered liberty and free government in this world; but surely selfishness and greed are not forever among the sons of men. They are not the best in human attainment and we may be sure the best shall one day so completely win that compromise shall not be even incidental in the progress of the free!

If Mr. Dennis's wild denunciation of compromise as revealed in all our slavery legislation had checked and chilled the enthusiasm of his little audience, his adroit change of manner, and the unexpected use of familiar English story had precisely the opposite effect. The orator resumed his seat with every manifestation of gratulation and approval. Even the president forgot his gavel and joined in the general applause.

The busy secretary alone preserved her sense of duty, and taking advantage of the confusion proceeded to collect the ballots of the judges. This effected, her reappearance, recalled the president to the order of the moment, and in absolute quiet he called for the decision of the judges. 'Three for the negative', replied the secretary, and bedlam broke loose which the president's gavel did not restrain. Squire Marks congratulated his opponent and disappeared.

Poor Squire Marks! He felt that he was right; he

believed he was right; but he was also wise enough to know that in the existing intensity of public sentiment, his side of the question could have no consideration even before very intelligent judges. Later on, for his consolation, he had a compliment from Father Blew, and a kindly note from young Governor Grimes, who happened to hear of the discussion, and who 'went out of his way', as the Squire reported, 'to ask all about it and to commend his argument.' Mrs. Lyon remarked to Mrs. Marks: 'I never saw the Squire when he looked so handsome.'

'He looked as he did when I first saw him!' said Mrs. Marks.

XXVIII

THE WORLD GROWS OLD

‘Do you know, Miss Blew, as I get older I am not near so particular about some things as I suppose I ought to be. I am getting kind o’ careless-like. I reckon I’m like some of the weeds this time of the year in my garden. In the summer when everything was growing full tilt, you could hardly get one of them out nohow, pull your very hardest, but now as the year’s done, you can pull them out with one hand; the roots are nearly all gone. It’s about that way with me, I reckon. I went to the Methodist church last Sunday night to hear Brother Sereno Doctover, the Dunkard preacher from over in Louisa. He belongs back east, but he has been visiting the Allwrights and the Dorwenters, and came up here to see if they was any of his kind in our little colony.

‘Now I used to be a Dunker myself, Miss Blew. I was a Nevius, you know. Dunker or Dunkard is not the right name you know; that’s just what other folks calls them because they’re Baptist, you know; we call ourselves Brethren because Jesus called his disciples that way, they say; but that’s no matter. I used to believe just as they do, that every word of scripture is just so, and it’s right even if we don’t understand it. I followed my Lord into the water in baptism and did all the things the Dunkers do; but somehow, altho I’m not sorry I thought that way, I’m not so much interested any more. I think just as much of the Bible as ever I did, but I care less what other folks think about it. Besides, I’ve

known Sereno all his life; but when I come to hear him talk, and go over all the old things they used to claim I couldn't think so at all. I didn't like to hear him call other people names — infidels and that like — because they think the world is more'n six thousand years old, and was built very slow-like — not in just six days as it says in the fourth commandment. When Brother Doctover went on to say that such folk was not Christians at all, I was very sorry. I told Mrs. Notweiler so, when we came out. She is the only other Dunker around here that I know of; but she stuck by the preacher. She said she believes just what the Bible says but she doesn't care nothing about how long it took to make the world nor how long ago it was. Well, except as I was taught, I don't know as I do either. When I got through my week's wash Monday — it was a bad one; you know the men's all off thrashin' these days — when I got through washing Monday, and the girls helped me some too, I thought of all the women that has had to work in all this long time, and it struck me that six thousand years was plenty long enough! But what difference does it make to poor me, Miss Blew, whether the world was made in six days or six years, or six million years; I know the washing and ironing next week will be just as big; and so on, and so on; and I am plumb tired!

'I must admit I never was much taken with the day's work idea though; that sounds too much like the way men do. I like better the words, "He spoke and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast"; that's the favorite text of the Brethren. Mr. Doctover quoted it; I guess I'm something of a Dunker yet, after all. You see I'm still a Dunker, though Pap's a class-leader, and I belong.

‘There was another thing, Brother Doctover said that I liked, because it was Dunker-like, I reckon; he said that in the beginning the Lord reckoned days commencing in the evening; “the evening was and the morning was, day one”; just like that. No matter if it gets dark there’s a morning just ahead. So we need never be afraid when it gets dark, Miss Blew! I can’t see as well as I could once; no I can’t, but I’m not afraid; it’s evening now; there’s morning just ahead!

‘But your brother was there, Miss Blew, how did he like it?’

‘Well he thought about it much as you do. He likes the speaker; he is young yet, he says, and will like the geology-people better as he gets better acquainted with them, and sees just what they are doing. He said that perhaps it is with our religion somewhat as with the old creation-days; we need not be alarmed when it begins to grow dark as if we should lose the sun; the earth will get in the way once in a while, but it is just the promise of another dawn. He says Mr. Doctover will find that a general principle, he thinks.

‘He thinks, too, it is perhaps very lucky that the Dunkard came along just when he did. The country’s all torn to pieces by political strife and the smoke from the Kansas prairies still hangs about the fields. We were maybe wiser to think, perhaps, at least part of the time, about something else; it is growing ever darker in the Republic and one needs all the faith he can find to look for a morning. So you see my brother got comfort from the preacher’s word, whether or not he agrees with him.’

The next Saturday afternoon Mrs. Ramsgate remained at home. She was alone. She was not afraid; not she. All the same she stayed close by a certain small window

whence she could look far across the valley to Mr. Lyon's big white house. Had not Pap gone to the store, and the girls — where were they? In fact, she was a little lonely, though possibly she did not know it.

As she stood there, half-musing, half-watchful, she noticed all at once as she later told her friends, a strange figure coming down to Lyon's bridge. Did she not see two men, one a very tall man, the other unduly short. The one was no doubt Brother McQ, now one of ourselves; but the tall man, who was he? In slow, dignified confidence he seemed to walk, apparently quiet, his face sometimes directed downward, but often lifted as if to scan the whole horizon round; he seemed in every way the absolute counterpart of his brisk companion, who full of gesticulation seemed to be talking all the time, even running forward betimes, then turning back, half-way, as if to look into the face of the stately stranger. What could it all mean? That man could not be the presiding elder, or anything of that kind; was not tomorrow the regular day for Brother Ozias on his usual circuit? Mrs. Ramsgate could make of it nothing at all. She turned back to her own resources, to her basket with its usual content for Saturday, and so watched the sunlight creep along the whitened floor marking in strange, fascinating beauty the hours of that beautiful November afternoon.

Meantime at the store her husband and her sons were having the time of their lives. The unusual charm and brilliance of the day seemed to warm the very hearts of men; almost everybody was out. Farmers who had not spoken to each other for months, not since the Dred Scott decision, said 'Howdy! the fall-plowing's fine!' Politics were less remembered when all discussed the

rising price of land, the crowds of new people sure to cover the valley 'once the roads dry up in the spring!' Stories untold for months were rehearsed for the benefit of the newcomer, the man who arrived 'only last spring' — what could he know? For his instruction the adventures of a decade summarized in the experience of some single hour, brought a fore-shortened but very exciting vision of his new surroundings. The parliament socially was almost at its best.

Tennessee had told a story or two, and had finally consented to tell how 'Dandy' Dobson happened, once upon a time, to get a saddle for nothing and a horse 'thrown in'.

It seems that Mr. Dobson's cabin stood at the top of a grove-crowned hillock, over toward the great river. For the stable, down near the highway, two great spreading basswood trees served, ample, if sometimes inadequate. From tree to tree a long, taut cable stretched — a horse-line to accommodate at night a much-prized horse. Beneath the same leafy tent the covered wagon stood, repository for many useful things, a Cincinnati saddle among the rest.

One cloudy evening in fall, a man on horseback came swinging along. It was Saturday, and Dobson, quite cleaned up and just going in to supper was astonished when the rider called out, 'Hello Dandy! Can you keep a fellow mortal? Looks for rain!'

Dobson flushed; he was a Mexican soldier — did not like the salute. But, he knew how it was himself; had he not ridden Pacer from Kentucky all the way?

'Leave off that "Dandy"'. Tie your nag to the horse-line, and come and get your supper; we'll see!'

'Fellow mortal' did as bidden, entered, and took place

at table; answered questions; but gave a name not remembered; served under Taylor in the Mexican War; otherwise did not talk much.

Things did not fit together just right. 'Fellow mortal' talked of epaulets and pompons, of infantry; Dobson with Scott had ridden a horse. 'Fellow mortal' admitted he was fond of horses but did not like their care; 'work for negroes'. But later under the great trees as his host pointed out the beauties of Pacer's skin and character — 'would stand unhitched anywhere, if rightly used' — the stranger concluded that with a good saddle, such a horse on the road might make his rider forget all trouble. 'I'd think you would be afraid somebody would steal him, away down here by the road; close to the river as you are.'

Dobson brought out his saddle. Things began to go better. 'Fellow mortal' even found the little hillock a pleasant place for a home. Dobson said he sometimes thought the mound-builders had piled it up; he had seen one like it in Illinois, had bones in it; but the idea scared his wife; she didn't like the idea of living over dead men's bones.

'Fellow mortal' said he had heard a traveler say that in Europe they pile bones under the churches — wagon-loads of them; 'makes the church respectable; the more dry bones, the more respect people have for the church!'

Dobson said he did not believe that; anyhow he was going to build his stables on the other side; had started with the corn-crib. 'That's where you'll sleep if you stay all night. The door isn't hung yet, but you're safe; a soldier-blanket for couch, a canvas for cover, and an oat-sheaf from the shadow-barn for pillow; there are worse beds in Mexico!'

On the prairie the merciful goddess of sleep waits not for wooing. Even two nervous Kentucky hounds had found that out. Day and night when not playing with the children, they slept about the wagon. Rabbits and foxes might chase right across their noses; they would not stir; such the peace of the prairie. 'Has to be something new, when they roar', said Dobson.

However, on this particular night, 'about the middle of it', Dobson says, a clamor broke about the basswood trees, enough to make the very mound-builders stir; so Mrs. Dobson put it. She was sure the house 'shook — just a little bit!'

'Something at the wagon', thought Dobson. He stepped to the door, called the dogs and presently all fell quiet. 'Nothing serious this time'.

But within a very few minutes the explosion came again, sudden as a musket volley, not unlike it, but continued; and Dobson realized some strange battle was on. He struck a light and, soon as possible, lantern in hand, reached the wagon. All was now quiet, the dogs licking his hand; not a sound? Nay; did he hear footsteps far down the road? He stood to listen. — No.

But — when he turned to the horse-line, what was his surprise! There stood 'Fellow mortal's' horse all saddled and bridled; and ready to go; but — the saddle, the saddle was his!

'Somebody tried to steal you, did he?' said Dobson, 'knows a good saddle, too, when he sees one; I got here just in time!'

Dobson tried to lead the horse to his place where hung the halter; the animal balked; stood fast! By aid of the lantern he quickly found that the horse in fact was fast! In haste and darkness the thief had thrown the

overgirt over the horse-line, and by buckling tight he stalled his horse!

‘Look!’ he said, ‘all scraped and torn by the line — that horse’s side; he tried hard enough to go; *rowels!* as I live! No wonder Tip and Tyler yowled! Wonder he didn’t try Pacer.

‘Hello, old Pacer, black beauty! Hello Pacer! where are you? He didn’t see you back in the darkness! Hello Pacer!’ He walked up the line; the lantern showed an empty halter! Dobson stood astonished; but heard a stir in the bushes not far, and listened, and called again, ‘Come Pacer! here, Pacer!’ That was enough; in a moment his pet was beside him; but — trembling and wet with sweat! He reached to pat his horse’s face and found a bridle! ‘Wet! and your side cut too! The lifted lantern showed the bridle was his own! What! The rascal tried you first; wanted my whole outfit; came for you and girded you up to the line! Did old Scott himself ever see the like of that!!

‘And you balked! the first time in your life, you balked! found yourself fast in the night, jumped and struggled and tore your tender skin, and balked! The hounds rushed to help you, and howled! and I stopped their noise; what a fool I was! Poor Pacer! I should have run!

‘Bound to have that saddle! Tried the second horse and it balked too! He never saw a horse-line, and didn’t even know a surcingle! I wish I had that overgirt round his neck right now! That buckle isn’t strong enough to make it as tight as I’d like to see it!

‘Poor Pacer!’ and he stroked his horse’s face as he led him to the line; ‘and then to think, when the villain fled my light, I called off the hounds! I’m an idiot!

‘He’s a fool; he didn’t get nothing; but I’m a bigger one, I didn’t get him!! I’ll go up and call “Fellow mortal” and we’ll come back and fix up these horses; we’re lucky! Isn’t it a wonder he did not wake up? But a tired soldier sleeps! Hardly got awake myself!’

Dobson slowly climbed the slope; threw his lantern-light across the cabin-floor. There lay ‘Fellow mortal’, deep, deep in sleep! Once roused, he was on his feet in a moment. ‘Didn’t I tell you there was danger right there by the road so close to the river, although I never suspected prowlers on a night like this. It must have been a neighbor, or some one from the river. Raining is it? — not much!’

Dandy said he was ready to cry; he was furious. ‘No help’, he said, ‘the scamp has confederates; they have boats; far in Illinois or Missouri by daylight.’

The horses cared for, Dandy found two guns, and the fellow soldiers stood guard till morning.

It was arranged that ‘Fellow mortal’ could stay until his horse could bear the saddle. The invitation was accepted; both men spent a tedious rainy day; but when the next dawned bright and clear ‘Fellow mortal’ was determined to stay no longer; he would start on foot. ‘Must reach the land-office as soon as possible to locate a corporal’s warrant.’

As he started off he said, as he gave his host a handful of silver, ‘when that horse gets well, use him to pay for his keep and hold till called for.’

A few days later a second horseman appeared asking for a ‘Mexican soldier’, reported to have been here on Sunday. Dobson told all he knew, not very much!

‘I hold a warrant for a man calling himself “General Taylor’s corporal.”’

Dandy brightened up as he replied.

'I thought he was something extra; but he has got his warrant; he's out to locate the land.'

'I'll save him some time if I can overtake him; I am an officer! I hold a warrant for *him*!'

After Dandy had told his friends about it all, he became very nervous and uncomfortable, 'Somebody is sure to come again in the night for that horse', he was told.

But as the days passed and he presently found himself in possession of two good horses and an extra saddle, his anger cooled. Not much was he troubled about the title, as he said to his neighbors; nor did these wonder that until he had better cover than basswood leaves, he slept in the wagon! On the wagon-bows, inside, were the usual rifle-hooks — these Dandy did not overlook; but for a pair of 'balky' horses, no one ever called! However, Dandy never did make out how the scamp slipped back to bed!

The applause that followed meant no doubt *encore*. Our modest coachman made all (feigned) effort to escape; but in the midst of the uproar who should appear around the corner but Brother McQ accompanied by the tallest man anybody had seen in a long, long time!

XXIX

THE RECORD

SILENCE primeval fell! Those who could slipped off the ends of the porch. Others began a retrograde movement, giving wide welcome, until McQ exclaimed: 'Gentlemen, this is the geologist, Mr. Worthen; he has been studying this county, and I got him to come over. You take care of him till I see who is inside.'

The silence deepened, if anything. The visitor remarked on the beauty of the day, but said no more; nor did anyone speak until Billy Shoemaker, a recent acquisition, found voice to say that he had long waited the appearance of a geologist; that he was interested in 'the geology of the Greene family', his wife being a Greene!

At this remark some smiled, but most envied Billy his courage although somewhat confused as to his intent. The geologist made no reply, doubtless because just at that moment McQ reappeared bringing out Father Blew and Squire Marks. Father Blew, as was his wont, greeted the stranger most cordially, showed him to a seat, and asked concerning his work and its progress and purpose.

'I met Mr. Lyon', said he, 'some time ago and he not only proposed entertainment at his house, but offered me a team of ponies and Mr. McQ here as driver; so this week I have been busy all up and down the streams, so low just now that we can see the rocks very well. Of course, our chief concern is to ascertain if we can determine the extent of Iowa's coal supply; this is the first

thing. We wish not only to be able to publish the extent of the coal-fields as a factor in the natural wealth of the State, but should also, when possible, make practical suggestions to people now looking for coal, or using coal. I have been studying this part of our business very closely in the adjoining county.'

'Coal is plentiful in the next one', said someone.

'Of course, anybody can find coal along the river or creek where it sticks out of the banks', said Squire Marks, 'but what we want to know is whether the stuff extends under the ground everywhere once we find it along the river; can we tell without boring or digging?'

'Often we can', said Mr. Worthen. 'Coal is generally indicated by certain rocks; in this part of the country they are quite easily known; here they are sandstones, *carboniferous*, that is *coal-bearing* sandstones. Wherever we find layers or masses of such rock, we may reasonably expect coal, though it is not always present. The coal is largely formed of the remains of plants, plants that grew on land, but generally in marshy or swampy places, where there was abundant fresh water. So we can recognize the coal-bearing rocks by plant-traces even where coal is lacking. These coal-bearing layers of rock do not completely cover the State, nor are they continuous where we do find them; they often extend, as you know, just a little way, and then run out, just as our present swamps are limited; although the old coal-making swamps were doubtless far more extended than the marshes we see about us in Iowa now.'

Mr. Worthen then explained briefly, by reference to the coal-banks with which the farmers were familiar, how the coal rocks presently come to the surface of the ground as we travel up the creek, or at least are suc-

ceeded by others from below. 'These latter here are limestones', he went on to say, — 'they were laid down in the sea. These are called sub-carboniferous, that is, under-carboniferous rocks, and in this valley show no coal. When these rocks are "exposed", as we say, show at the top of the ground, or next under the soil, clays, sands, etc., then boring would be of no use; we are probably below the coal already.'

Father Blew now joined the Squire in asking their guest to come to the lyceum some Friday evening to talk to them of the Iowa rocks or to talk any Sunday about the age of the world as it seemed to him; but the man of science declined. He said the State Survey had certain things to report. A report must be made right away. Notwithstanding this fine afternoon, the snows would soon be here, and then outdoor work must cease. The report would be written, published, and it was not likely he could come this way again.

Everybody was now ready to talk, to ask questions. Would not Mr. Worthen look at this piece of land, or at that; could he tell by a sample from a well whether there was coal on the farm? Nor were quasi-religious queries lacking, thanks to Mr. Doctover. Was the earth more than six thousand years old? Would the same clay make a horse that made an elephant? — an inquiry of highly suspicious character. Did the ancients know about geology, or about coal? Were geologists trying to upset the Bible?

In the effort to meet some of these questions, Mr. Worthen talked long and patiently, all that sunny afternoon till light began to fade along the silver hills. To some of our questions he made no reply; to others he made extended answer; not one provoked criticism, ir-

relevant, though it were. The words he uttered are hardly yet remembered; his theme lingers in tradition, hardly a phrase or sentence yet complete. Did he not have a winsome voice, a pleasant way and manner, as to the farmers he told the story of the sea, its life, its shells, its corals, its deeps and shallows, tides and streams, eternal motion; nor less its shores, its pounding waves, its shifting sands, nay, its finest silt, like flour washed from that watery roaring mill, spread far as changing ocean currents run, to cover at such varying depths all objects that crowd the ocean's floor?

But how did not our farmers listen as he told of shifting levels, how the shores themselves always go up and down! Of the 'Temple of Serapis' he told them, of old columns, their bases in the water! Remnants of some marble mart where two thousand years ago on dry land the crowding men of commerce went daily in and out. Evidently once, long ago, the shore went down and took the 'temple' with it, until the columns were buried in mud, in water more than twenty feet. Then certain clams, beneath the water, bred in water, assailed those marble columns, burrowed holes in them and lodged. After a while, the shore came up again, slowly, softly; the columns still perfectly erect upon their bases, and the sea-shells in the marble still, in their holes, now so high above the ground! Curious barometers of the sea, those ancient columns standing with record all may read!

He talked of Tenterden sands high-lifted now where rode at anchor once, it is believed, great Caesar's fleet. All shores rise and fall and the present is but the image of the past.

But the sea-bottom nearly everywhere, especially near

shores, is strewn with shells and corals, sometimes as they grew, sometimes broken and scattered. All these in time are buried as they lie, and in time form part of the ocean's solid floor; so that when here in Iowa we find such objects in the clean limestone rocks, there can be no possible doubt that right here, where we now sit, hundreds of feet above sea-level, once rolled the tide-waters of the Atlantic Ocean many fathoms deep!

'The sea-bottom was lifted', the speaker said, 'for here it is. We can all see it with its shells and corals.' He even went on to tell how, since the limestone, all sorts of things took place; all the coal and its sandstones were laid down for one thing; anyone can see it who follows the river channels; there is the coal on top of the limestone, latest formed of the rocky layers here. So, and not otherwise, God made the world we know.

Thus did our kindly teacher lay for us the foundations of his science and now in simplest words he ventured to enlarge his theme, telling how in other parts of the country and the world, other rocks were found above the coal, resting upon it, whole series of rocks making in all thousands of feet in thickness; and so likewise, if we moved from place to place, where the rock could be seen in walls, 'in section', as men say, we might find below the coal, below our Iowa rocks seen here, other great masses layer upon layer, measuring in the opposite direction, toward the earth's center, thousands and thousands of feet. Where not otherwise disturbed, all lie in beautiful order, course upon course as though a mason had laid them; and yet every course formed just as were those we now know and quarry day by day; formed beneath the sea, the product of the slow milling and grinding of ocean's tireless waves, spread by

ocean's unnoticed streams, hardened to stone and lifted to view at last in the landscapes of this world. 'Even the mountains are largely much the same; differ chiefly in that the lift continued longer, went higher, thousands of feet instead of hundreds as here in Iowa!'

The speaker paused. His hearers stood silent. Fascinated they were but none the less astonished. Everybody had listened; some heard but understood not; some heard and thought they knew; some heard and understood, and were delighted by the wondrous vision.

All waited for Father Blew to break the silence. He was shrewd. 'Mr. Worthen, I suspect you think we should now answer our own questions; but you can do it for us so much better. You have not mentioned the age of the world, you have said nothing about time!'

'Time', said the geologist, 'is our sense of the progress of change. The corn we planted in spring has grown, produced a crop which is now in our cribs, all within a few months; the morning glory at the door blooms and withers in an hour; the meteor of our summer sky flashes and is gone. In none of these things do we see the *process* of change but we soon discover that change is going on.

'Many familiar objects change more slowly; not only do we fail to see the process but we must wait long, change much ourselves, before we discover any change at all. The wood in our buildings slowly goes to dust. The stones in the wall, in the field, show signs of wear; but of such stealthy changes we are all unconscious; only after long years, if at all, do we remark the fact. How then shall we express in terms of time, i.e., of human experience, the slow-moving, but tremendous changes legible on the stony face of earth? Rocks formed

beneath the sea and lifted then to mountains, with sloping sides where for miles and miles in channels of solid rock the rivers run? Six thousand years! Why the pyramids are almost as old as that; but the very same limestone that men lifted to slope the sides of those old structures forms in Switzerland the capstone of those vaster pyramids, those "palaces of nature" called the Alps, ten thousand feet above the sea!

'Professor Hall thinks the Niagara Falls may give some idea of geologic time, where over a tremendous natural dam, over a mighty ledge of limestone rock, Niagara River pours. It happens that the edge of that dam is constantly under weight and wear, so that the Falls move steadily back, up the river, a little every year. If we assume, as we usually do, that the present repeats the past, then we may study the age of the Niagara Falls. From the Falls to Lake Ontario, where the river finally empties, it has cut in solid rock a channel one hundred and fifty feet deep, seven miles long. These boys here will tell you that at the rate of a foot a year, the river must have spent nearly forty thousand years in pounding out the channel; at the rate of two feet a year, it would take twenty thousand years!

'As in the case of Jupiter's columns, all this you can see for yourselves; you can stand and watch the graving tools and hear the thunderous tumult of their toil.

'But the rocks in which the channel lies are, of course, older than the Falls. They are indeed, as we know from other sources, very, very old. They lie not very far from the bottom of that rocky wall (section) which, as I said a little while ago, reveals the natural history of the planet.

'Finally, in brief', he said, 'in answer to your ques-

tion, I think as you now see, the world is more than six thousand years old. It is very, very, very old: millions of years, rather than thousands, I should say. In the long infinity of the past there is plenty of time.'

As far as concerns religious theories, Mr. Worthen believed that Hugh Miller, the great Scotch geologist and friend of Agassiz, in his book, *The Testimony of the Rocks*, would probably meet our questions better than he could. Miller was a student. 'At any rate', he said, 'you will find out that geologists are not trying at all to upset the Bible; they are simply trying to find out how the earth has been made, in order better to understand how to use it wisely; but the mystery of its origin remains unsolved.'

'I am glad to come over to Iowa sometimes to work with your Professor Hall, one of the great geologists of the world; usually I find all I can do between Burlington and Warsaw; what has been found between Burlington, Ottumwa, and Iowa City, McQ can tell you. But really, for now, good-bye!'

He rose, shook hands with Father Blew and Squire Marks, whose thanks seemed to please him and in a moment disappeared.

The farmers all shouted, 'Good-bye!' For the evening, Buchanan and Dred Scott, even Lincoln and Douglas were forgotten; men at home talked of what they had heard; envied Brother McQ who, for fear of questions, dared not go to church next day! Mr. Ramsgate and William stayed a moment to ask the Squire concerning Niagara; had he not seen that spectacle sublime, now more wonderful than ever.

Squire Marks talked well. Vividly could he describe that glorious river, coming with such swiftness to the

brink of destiny, only to be shattered in one instant to vast volumes of thundering snowy spray, shot through as shone the sun, by all the colors of myriad rainbow-arches, changing, shifting, moving from deep to deep; all at length recovered between the dripping walls of that rocky chasm, so long, long in forming, still unformed, where marvelous whirlpools, plunging, rushing torrents, roar and chase forever, but, by comparison, seem quiet; like fountains, silent fountains, such as move in youthful dreams!

Mr. Ramsgate and the Squire talked on and on, till the sinking of the sun, but William heard them not; his mind was full. Had he not met a man of science—a plain unassuming student, seeking certain facts; not for controversy or argument of any kind, but as guide in the directing of human effort? Besides, had not for him time's concept taken on new form; startling at the first, nor less astounding at the last; infinite the future as the past? He had never dreamed of such a thing! Of DeQuincey the boy had never heard; but what the angel said of space to the man under his guidance climbing the endless stairways of the skies, this prairie boy said in his own heart that night and slept not: 'End there is none; lo, also there is no beginning!'

Meantime, a lone woman watching day's decline from her poor log-cabin-window, waited still to see the coming of her children! But across the valley saw she not something different far, a picture new? Two men she saw ascending now the slope beyond the bridge, a tall man and a short; but evidently they are silent now; there are no gestures; the march is slow and the shorter man follows the other! Had he learned something? Is he not, for once at least, lost in thought?

XXX

REVIVALS ALSO

‘DON’T be in a hurry, Mrs. Ramsgate’, said her old and constant friend one Saturday afternoon early in October, ’58, ‘don’t be in a hurry. I have not seen you in a long time. You’ve told me all about politics and the elections soon to come—I hope William will be sent to our new capital this winter—but you have told me nothing at all about yourself. Mr. Ramsgate will not expect you for an hour yet; there are no revival meetings yet this fall; he has no singing to look after, not yet at least, so don’t run right away.’

‘No, that’s a fact, I haven’t been over to see you much of late, Miss Blew; maybe you noticed it and maybe you didn’t. I didn’t think it had been so long; nearly a year, you say. Well, anyhow what with all the panics, and revivals, and frosts, and politics, and bad luck generally, I kind of lost heart about visiting much, and pretty near about Iowa, though Mr. Lyon keeps saying Iowa is all right. But what do you think about revivals, Miss Blew?’

But before her friend could make reply, Mrs. Ramsgate went on.

‘Pap went ’round among the neighbors to find out. He told your brother that Mr. Dennis and the Squire both said no.

‘Your brother said, “You asked the Squire and he said no.” Yes. “And Mr. Dennis said no?” Yes. “Fine! Fine! You’re doing fine! For the first time

those men are of one mind! Fine! Don't say another word, lest one might change!"

'Just then who comes but Mr. Lyon to ask the men to go with him to Galesburg to hear Lincoln and Douglas debate. It's pretty far; but Mr. Lyon has friends all the way, about Young America, Sunbeam, and such places; "won't cost a cent", he said.

'Your brother didn't promise, but Pap forgot the revivals; he and Mr. Lyon made up their minds to go. And so last Wednesday morning Mr. Lyon hitched his best ponies to the light wagon, and came driving around for Pap; and what do you think, Miss Blew! Who do you suppose was in the back seat sitting up straight as you please, side by side? Squire Marks and Mr. Dennis!! Why it used to be so when crops were good, you couldn't 'a got those two men even to look at the same wagon, to say nothing about riding across country in it; but now they're so poor, they sympathize with each other and help each other; they do, as if they'd always been friends! I believe the revival has begun already! I surely do!

'The boys went on horseback; they stopped to see the colleges and haven't got back yet, but Pap and the rest just got home. They say it was cold, but splendid, all the same; the biggest crowd you ever did see, coming from everywhere and other counties; a band on every corner, with room for all the big bass notes; everybody playing his best, but every band something different! Pap laughed till he cried telling about the noise they made; and the parades! Some so long that one end had to stay out in the country; you couldn't always tell which end! Then they had wagons with all kinds of jokes and things, and girls dressed in white, everyone a

State; Kansas dressed all in black, of course, following along behind.'

'How about the speeches?'

'Oh, they were wonderful, Pap said. He said Douglas went on to tell what a poor excuse Lincoln was anyway. He had tried farming, and flat-boating, and liquor-selling and law, and failed in every one. Now he wants to try to be senator and fail there.

'When Lincoln got up to answer he said, "all that the Judge says is true: I have worked on a farm, I have tried rail-splitting, I have run a flat-boat, I have kept a store and I have tried to practice law. One thing, however, the Judge forgot to mention. He forgot to say that if I sold liquor on one side of the counter, he was always on the other side!"'

'Pap said it was just wonderful; the people cheered and shouted for a long time. Pap didn't like to hear that Lincoln ever sold liquor — maybe he didn't. All Lincoln said was that *if* he sold it, Douglas did as bad, for he dranked it! Oh, at any rate we have heard as much for Douglas once or twice before!

'But Mr. Dennis liked Lincoln because he was a Kentuckian and yet was fighting slavery, same as he is. The Squire liked the argument; said Lincoln had the Judge entirely beat on his own ground. I tell you William and Morton will talk pretty large when they get home, just as boys do. William, as you say, wants to go up to Des Moines this winter, and the Kibbutses are calling him a black Republican. He says he doesn't care, if they will only vote for him! I don't reckon he'll get it anyway.'

'I am so glad the boys heard that debate; they will remember it forever', said Miss Blew, 'and I am sure

William will be elected. I rejoice in the splendor of that boy's courage; so absolutely careless of hardship is he; ignorant of difficulty; full of the happy confidence of a boy. May life's disillusionment come late for him! Did you say revival meetings are to go on this winter?"

"I suppose they will; but I don't know as they will. Pap these days is pretty near plumb discouraged about himself, Miss Blew, he sure is. Some mornings he can't speak loud enough to shoo the cat. You know at the revival meetings last winter they always had Pap sing for them "The Lord will Provide". Everybody'd lost in the panic last year 'most everything they had, and it did look as though if the Lord didn't provide, nothing else would; so Pap had to sing the same song 'most every night.

"Others took it up for him toward the last; but he was clear done out; and now he'll maybe not be able to sing any more, maybe not at all! and he is very down in the mouth; especially since the frost caught the corn, some of it. Do you never get discouraged, Miss Blew?"

"Oh yes, sometimes; don't you?"

"Well, I don't very often now, I just tell you; for two reasons — I haven't got the time, for one thing; for if things are at the worst, if they change, as they're pretty sure to, they're bound to be better; and I have just all I can do to take care of them till they are. What with losing last year the little money we'd all saved up for a new house, and about all our crops this year, I have more than I can do trying to see through the winter.

"Besides getting discouraged isn't healthy; discouraged people like-as-not get sick, and don't do well anyhow; I don't believe it's doing Pap any good right now. I tell him I'd be chipper, even if some corn is soft. I'd try

to fool the doctors anyway; many a man has done it; prognostice is generally bad, I think, so as to allow for chances!

'They're talking revivals again for this winter; but I have somehow kind of lost interest in that, too. Davie Baird says they were all converted last winter as *were* to be; all as *wanted* to be, I would say; your brother and some of the men think we ought this winter to have the lyceum instead; but what do you think of revivals, Miss Blew? I don't remember seeing you out, not once, so far as I know. Maybe you don't believe in revivals, some folks doesn't you know.'

'Oh yes, I believe in revivals, indeed I do; nature is just full of revivals. The word, you know, means renewal of life; recovery, as we sometimes say. On a hot, dry day in summer our garden plants often wilt; the clover lies flat on the meadow, and seems ready to die; but when the cool of night comes on with the dew, the leaves all rise up again and at morn are fresh and fair as ever; they revive, we have a revival.

'In the evening you and I go weary to sleep; in the morning we rise refreshed — a revival. More wonderful still in this, our northern world, frosts come and seem to kill almost the whole living world! Just look out and see that corn-stalk yonder, utterly dry and dead; like the white flag of final surrender, and that at half-mast! the whole landscape silent, except now and then a crow that calls, or a complaining jay; yet here are you and I not much disturbed? We know the revival of spring, and in six months from now we shall look out upon a tide of life that simply sweeps all before it, so fast and far that we can almost hear the pulsing of its myriad waves! Nature herself has revivals all the time.

‘Now, we are in every way a part of nature. You and I are really very much like other living things. Even all our mental, spiritual world has no language of its own; we must borrow, as we say; using the words that tell of common things in a different way, figuratively we say. No man, no matter how brilliant he may be, can think intently upon much more than one thing at a time, nor continuously upon any one thing for any great length of time; at least not with safety. And so, when our ordinary life goes happily forward, it is summer time all the while, the day, the year. There is no place then for faith, or hope, or courage; these virtues are not needed; all is well; life is one glad song.

‘But when upon such easy-going experience, whether of the man or of a community like ours, change comes — like the coming of darkness, and frost and winter — every delight seems to disappear and all voices of gladness turn to complaint, if not lament, or die in very silence of despair; only the cypress or the cedar shows sombre green above the wilderness of snow which the winter piles upon the prairie.

‘Pretty dark; but you and I by this time know that such things after all can not destroy us, or even long disturb. The soul refuses to sit in darkness bound with fetters of iron. There are too many certainties that make us greatly independent of physical disaster. The soul says these things shall pass. I am superior to all these things because I know them, and I know they can not touch me! I am part of a better, a living world that is just as certain as the tides of spring!

‘Then hope comes up, and courage, and faith — triumphant sisters three — in a confidence, strong as it is natural, that goodness can not be destroyed. For joy

and gladness the earth exists, and the soul exists for God! And that, too, is a revival!

‘But the revival of the prairie is a revival of each individual plant, and a revival of this community, especially since we are all in common hardship, will affect us all. There is this difference, however; the revival of the plants comes with conditions; the sun returns and then the plants help themselves. We may help ourselves, especially we may help each other. Our quickened spirits help us to endure, our confidence expects the blessing, as Jupiter from his watch-tower in the skies signals the sun unrisen!

‘Oh, yes! I believe in revivals; they are part of the system of things in which we live. But since in recovery we are more privileged, so perhaps is our greater liberty not entirely free from danger. This year too much rain and too much sun destroyed our wheat, left us not a grain, nor even straw! And so perhaps in our religious life, over-effort, too much zeal may lose for us the very thing we seek and leave us empty-handed. You may even ruin the voice of your dearest singer and leave him in despair; a Milton not only blind but voiceless, too, that *had* been a calamity!’

All this perhaps escaped Mrs. Ramsgate, perhaps almost altogether; so far as concerned the English poet, at least; but she understood the general drift of Miss Blew’s sermonizing and the reference to her husband she caught.

‘I told him not to sing so much; I told him his voice didn’t sound good any more; I told him nobody that liked music wanted to hear him; that if he didn’t stop pretty soon there wouldn’t be anybody or anything for the Lord to provide for!’

‘It wouldn’t be so bad if he would only sing music; if he’d get the boys and McQ and sing “*The Heavens Are Telling*”, or something like that. But a silly tune! — anybody can wear out his voice with a thing like that! Good music is better; a great sight smoother, don’t you think so, Miss Blew? But I don’t think your kind of revival would ever convert the Kibbutses, Miss Blew; it’s too slow and quiet-like; they’re fine boys, too.

‘There’s some folks thinks the comet’s to blame for all our trouble this time. You can remember how we had one in ’46 along with the Adventists and the Mexican War, although I reckon those poor ignorants didn’t notice it much. I don’t believe in comets at all myself, though I do sleep better somehow after they’re gone! You know they do say one’s going to meet up with earth one of these days and then there *will* be grief, and I know it!

‘I think it’s with stars the same as with people; as long as they stay where they’re put, in their places, it’s all right; but when they get to moving around the neighborhood promiscuous-like, then there is pretty sure to be suffering. But Pap says the best thing for he and I is to go over to the schoolhouse next Friday evening when the lyceum starts again, to hear Squire Marks talk about comets, for what he and I don’t know about the subject is a good deal.’

‘But Mrs. Ramsgate! did you see the comet last night? The finest thing in all the northern sky! The stars are out, of course, clear and bright as in mid-winter, golden stars against the violet-black of velvet sky; but the comet, the comet, come now to gladden our eyes, our hearts — splendid, shimmering train of silver stretching away down the sky, brightening as it goes, like a tre-

mendous meteor that does not flash or go but keeps its gleaming way past the constellations all, but like them too, slow-sinking to the west. Oh, the comet! there's nothing like it; why shall we not take *that* for our revival? Remember; it was a moving star that brought to shepherds once angelic song! Oh yes: we'll go to the lyceum; yes indeed! to hear what good fortune that comet brings! we'll revive!'

Poor Miss Blew! as she herself long afterward reported, despite all her pietism, her quiet self-restraint, here she was, almost as voluble as her neighbor; nearly distracted by the miseries about her, without power to help; yet summoning to her own support all her philosophy, all her intellectual consolation lest she lose her balance all! Had she not been now, for weeks, watching, night after night, at the Langstraw house, vainly hoping to save his diphtheria-stricken children, seeing one after another swept from life, despite all her nursing, one after another borne away and laid to final rest beneath the oak trees on the hill-top, where soon, through leafless branches, only the comets and the silent stars keep watch and guard. Near distracted was Miss Blew!

'I always did like the strike on your old clock, Miss Blew; it just struck five. I wish it would strike fifty-five; I'd just sit and listen. Do you know if it's an eight-day clock?

'Pap says they make them that way now. Some folks in Indiana had one like that, but never found it out till once the old man forgot to wind it, and the clock run right on just the same. Like some of the newcomers here in Iowa; plumb-discouraged, going back, because this one year, the grass all rusted in May and the wheat blighted in June and now the corn is froze in September.

They don't seem to know that Iowa is wound up to go, whether they wind it or not! The striking weight's maybe got caught somehow this year, but it'll ring all right next: you see if it don't.'

'Good-bye! Miss Blew.'

XXXI

DONATI : THE APPROACH

‘THAT is a mysterious providence’, said Father Blew one early October morning to his sister, when first they heard that Dan Purkeypile had returned from Kansas, ‘that is a mysterious providence that brings that man here, right from the battlefields of Kansas, just when some of us are trying to use the comet to give our people a chance to think, before the whole Republic is plunged in war. But then, maybe the comet is a mysterious providence too’, he said, and smiled.

But strange to say, Dan, as he met the neighbors, did not say much about the war at all. He merely remarked that it was all over now; Uncle Sam had taken a hand and it was safer to live in Kansas now than anywhere else, he thought. ‘But such a fine country! The most beautiful country I ever saw’, he said, ‘I just came back to get my folks. I am going to move this fall, if it keeps warm like this, so that I can follow the Mormon trace across Iowa; comes snow, I can’t find the road.’

Dan evidently did not want any war; the providence was all in the comet’s favor. He said he was so glad the lyceum was to start again, he wanted to go once more before he left the prairie for good!

Sure enough when Friday evening came Mr. Purkeypile was at the schoolhouse and his neighbor, Mr. Dennis, too. Miss Blew was there — something almost unheard of for her — and Mrs. Ramsgate right beside her; and all the old-time people, nearly; far more than the schoolhouse could well receive. But that was nothing

unwonted; the men had been used to that from the beginning. The weather was still warm, windows and doors everywhere open; no more frost as yet, no wind; the mellow odor of ripening corn hangs lazily about low hills and valleys.

Detained by certain complications which, as related by the Squire's only daughter, now coming to graceful womanhood, were by no means beyond ordinary experience, the man of the hour came late.

'When a corn-husker is to lecture on comets, I think a man's family has something to say about his personal appearance, even if the man himself is all ready to start with not so much as a white collar, or collar of any kind; beggar's ticks and Spanish-needles all over his coat, and even his hickory husking-pin still on his finger! I *think* so!'

The Squire came late. But when he arrived his daughter was with him. For looking at her, nobody saw the orator at all. He was merely allowed to follow, when the crowd about the door parted quickly for the blushing girl; but once inside he was surprised. Nobody was waiting for him at all!

For several nights, everybody had seen Donati's splendor, but the lyceum had started up this time apparently for something else. Had not the representative of the immortal Kidd (not him of the buried treasure) already found the prairie, and set us all on fire with glories of a different sort? Had not every aspiring young politician of the neighborhood now become elocutionist, practicing night and day for many weeks? Simpson's hay-barn afforded favorite space for such outburst of effort; did not the critical schoolma'am nowadays as in times gone by still always live at Simpson's?

And were we not making headway, the most promising? Not once but often Catiline's defiance had echoed from walls festooned with cobwebs far out of reach of broom; by dint of oft-repeated poetic denunciation had we not all learned to 'hate the bowl', even though none of us had ever seen it, metaphor and sense alike disappearing generally in the vehemence of tragic declamatory effort. 'Stay, jailer stay', made everybody flee the premises to avoid mental disaster, whatever may have been the reputed action of the jailer. But more fortunately often for merry young-folk, all innocent of history, the middle of a warm, sunny Saturday afternoon became for the sleepy Turk 'midnight in his guarded tent', until forsooth Bozzaris found voice to 'cheer his band'! He always found it!

Accordingly, when the belated Squire appeared, he was far from late — as he soon learned — for his part in the program. He entered indeed just in time to hear the closing sentences of President Dr. Willowbush's 'opening remarks', made with much rubbing of hands and various other signs of self-gratulation after the manner of the man. The Doctor had 'noted with much pleasure the interest our young people are finding in the noble art of oratory, an art which made Cicero and Dan'el Webster famous, and would make some of our boys famous too' — he hoped — 'and that very soon.' He was glad of it, and was glad to learn that for the lyceum this winter, the elocutionary art would be prominent. 'We need it, and we are to have forthwith an interesting sample, the declamation of a new piece, never before heard on the prairie.' The Doctor was also glad to say that 'at the conclusion of Squire Mark's explanation of the comet, which will not be long, the program

is to conclude with music by the recently organized string-band, Brother McQ, leader. Hope has been expressed that everybody will stay to hear the band, encouraging them by his presence.'

The Doctor sat down mid great applause, leaving his audience determined to stay to hear the music anyway; was that not the very thing for which they had come? But Squire Marks — who had been husking corn all week on the 'far forty' — had not heard.

Alas for the idealistic farmer; he was grieved in spirit. What was that Doctor thinking about? Didn't he know? Here, before this people, rose one of the most marvelous spectacles ever spread for human admiration; not a comet merely, but an unusual comet; a sheen of brilliance veiling the very skies, stretching far across the north, down almost to the horizon of the meadows, brightening as it came, ending now in a lovely star beside Arcturus yonder, almost as bright as he, soft-shining as a planet! No moon; heaven given up to silent stars, all gazing, as he thought, from the far-flung, violet arches of our crystal night! Majestic, wonderful it seemed to him, beyond expression wonderful, and beautiful as strange! And yet upon spectacle sublime as this, how soon to pass! men would intrude some boyish declamation, and the noise of country fiddles, while he was asked to '*explain* the comet'! Where was Father Blew? Have our farmers lost their wits?

Poor Squire Marks. Had not his simple-minded Quaker mother, albeit all in drab, in the long ago set his boyhood pallet athwart the open dormer window, bidding him watch the stars away in the western sky. Across the Schuylkill valley then they shone. 'Watch the stars; are they not God's sign of beauty', so she

said. And here was the grown-up man yet to learn that human hearts are limited; that even for the strongest the splendor of nature is too vast; even the blessed sunlight burns! Small honor still, for the idealist among the sons of men!

Patience, patience, worthy Squire! That Quaker mother has not lived in vain; beyond all else on earth, the poet lives!

'The first number on our program this evening will be a declamation, "John Gilpin's Ride", to be rendered by Mr. Webster Kibbutts. Mr. Kibbutts.'

The young gentleman thus presented by our secretary tarried hardly to be called, so prompt was he. Almost before men knew it, there he stood, before the old fireplace, to-night by Mrs. Lyon's loyal care stuffed full with sumac, golden-rod, and aster. Did the Squire see these? There stood Kibbutts, perfectly rigid, his small anaemic lips close-drawn, his eyes tight shut — lest he *forget* — reeling off stanza after stanza of the English poet's masterpiece, in such strange guise; new indeed upon the prairie! Without modulation, without gesture, with never a change of posture of any character whatsoever!

This was the lyceum, and our people, as we have seen, were nothing if not dignified and proper; so that notwithstanding temptation far beyond all precedent, there was during the performance not a smile nor whisper. But once the speaker concluded, opened his eyes, and, as if in startled surprise looked out upon the crowd, the laughter and applause were simply phenomenal and entirely genuine. Squire Marks forgot his troubles — imaginary mostly, sensitive soul — and, although seated near the elder Kibbutts, bent fairly double! Father Blew, sitting as usual near the front, had, it is true, during the

declamation been observed as strangely shivering, somewhat to the alarm of friends, for the room was not warm; but now he not only smiled, but once and again removed and wiped his glasses ere order was finally quite restored. 'What is the matter of that boy?' whispered Mrs. Ramsgate to her companion; either the free-knowledger was clear off in his guess, or else the elocutioner has got him wrong wound-up; which is it Miss Blew?'

The little secretary stood and waited.

XXXII

THE COMET

‘THE next speaker, Mr. Ezra Marks, will talk to us about the comet. Mr. Marks.’

The Squire was equal to the occasion. ‘Comet should have been the name of that horse’, he said, ‘he went fast from one end of his journey to the other and then covered the same course back again, much to the alarm of those who watched. These are all marks of a comet! A comet is a wild colt on the prairie, and when a boy gets mounted he does not always know when or where he may get off.’

This remark, probably because of certain well known personal experiences of the young orator, immediately put the house in uproar. But soon the Squire went on.

‘The stars to our ears are silent; uproar and disorder are not for them; sun and moon are the steady time-pieces of the world. True, they seem to suffer temporary calamity once in a while, in dim or dark eclipse, but like good servants they soon get over it, and we all go on just as before.

‘But comets are different; they come, and they go; nobody seems to know whence, nor where. They keep on for a time, getting bigger and bigger, finally diminish and vanish. Some men imagine that a big one is sure to hit the world one of these days, knock it to pieces and maybe set it on fire. Some are sure the earth is to be burned up; and some fancy that even our present beautiful visitor may be on such an errand at this very moment.’

The audience was very quiet now. The idea of disaster was not unfamiliar. Some of us, only last Sunday, had listened to a sermon on this very theme. Did not our minister at the newly built Presbyterian church in the village argue in hopeful strain that while cometary activity might some day prove for the earth conclusively efficient, nevertheless our present visitor could not possibly do such execution. 'The fullness of time is not yet', he said. 'The Gospel must first be preached among all nations, and all the tribes of Israel first be gathered in, before the end shall come.' Under these conditions it was plain that the comet now in the skies was not the expected torch.

It was noted that for some reason, after this in every way interesting, consolatory, and tranquilizing speech, for some reason a collection taken for missions in the Holy Land was unexpectedly small!

'However', the Squire continued, 'I can not explain the comets, nor can anybody else. It is only recently as time goes that we begin to have satisfactory knowledge of their movements, to say nothing of their history or meaning. Dr. Dick, who seems to know all about the scenery of the skies, at least as seen from Scotland, does not tell us everything. For those who come next, there will, I think, always remain some place for wonder, some room for science and for song. I am not an astronomer; all I know is what I have read, added to what anyone can see.

'Comets have been often in the sky and people have been looking at them for thousands of years, noting their sudden appearance, their singular form, as of flame or sword, their waxing and their waning; men have somehow taken alarm long, long ago, and have associated

comets with disaster of one sort or other, with pestilence, famine, war, of which, of course, there has always been abundance in the world, plenty to confirm suspicion for every comet that ever shone. It chances that the history of past centuries is largely concerned with just such disasters, and accordingly the disturbing comets have in all recorded human story received plenty of mention, adding, in an all-unintended way, very much of interest to our modern studies.

‘There was a comet, for instance, to which I may presently refer again, at the very time when William the Norman invaded England. Everybody saw it and knew war was coming; and war came! We know more about this, because in that time about 1066, women in kings’ courts made great pieces of embroidery, sometimes with historical subjects, and such a thing illustrating the Conquest still exists in France, made to illustrate the invasion of England. In this piece of embroidery, the comet is not omitted, but is set out and “viewed with alarm”, as our orators say. There *was* war, the comet was “*explained*”, I suppose, and the course of history changed.

‘About four hundred years ago two interesting comets flashed across the sky — one in 1454, one in 1456. At the time the Turks were threatening all Europe. They had taken Constantinople and were evidently intending to overrun the whole western world. The comet of ’54 was very beautiful, large enough to attract universal notice, but the tail was toward the east. Like a drawn sword it hung over Constantinople, greatly to the alarm of the Moslem who imagined a new crusade to drive him out of Europe.

‘To Christians this comet, of course, was entirely wel-

come; but in 1456 came comet number two, fine as the first, but with the tail turned the other way! A sword now hanging over Europe! The alarm was universal, especially as the Turks, roused perhaps by the earlier portent, were actually moving! The Pope ordered the bells in all churches to be rung at noon, to remind people to pray, not against the comet — that, if anything, was itself a warning-signal — but against the Turk! In Catholic countries the mid-day bells have been ringing ever since! Nowadays their message is altogether peaceful: they call the world to dinner. The Turk meantime has fallen quiet; but not the comets; although since the days of Isaac Newton and Halley in England, they too are doing better.

‘But for survival, as sources of alarm, over the Turk the comets have immense advantage. They antedate such modern creatures by thousands and thousands of years. They seem to have always inspired terror. Just now in the *Observer* and other religious newspapers, men are discussing whether comets are mentioned in the Bible, our oldest literature. I believe they are. They are classed with signs in heaven, I think; with eclipses, darkening of moon and sun, etc. I sometimes suspect, too, that to comets we owe, in part at least, the suggestion of wings in the sky, the portraiture of angels (messengers). A double comet, *i.e.*, with two streamers, would naturally enough suggest flight, as of some creature “flying in the midst of heaven”. Perhaps for Isaiah such a comet-terror suggested the thought developed by Byron:

The angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed; —

Perhaps a comet hung athwart the sky when for David

“the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it”, much as the Turk saw the sword hanging over his new-won capital, Constantinople. The whole race has been schooled in the fear of comets; small wonder people have been and are still alarmed, even on this far prairie.

‘We are always liable to fear anything of which we are ignorant, especially if it moves; ignorance is the mother of fear, nervous fear, panic. Of all the stars in heaven, for all men, the comet was most alarming; the comet plainly moved! It came so much like the “thief in the night”; men suddenly discovered it; the danger was upon them before they knew it; and then — thank heaven — it went away!’

Squire Marks had been speaking in his usual earnest, measured way; everybody attentive. The attention, in fact, was just a little painful. Just enough of the old feeling still remained, supported as it was by Scriptural allusion so recently brought to general attention, to lend to the Squire’s argument a peculiar fascination; and his latest remark that the comet finally went away brought a real though perhaps unacknowledged relief, and the audience smiled!

But with a smile the speaker did not answer back. Oh no; he was far too serious for that; he simply emphasized the situation.

‘All that I have said is well known’, he said, ‘it is virtually in the memory, that is instinctively, in the minds of all. People who think that the phases of the moon help or hinder growing beans are all afraid of comets, and come out of the house when the eclipse is over! As I have already said, these old traditions linger in the minds of men; it requires an effort to be free; in

fact, we are even willing to have our better knowledge put to grief; we rather like to be humbugged, and a mere century or so of knowledge while it helps, helps more and more, is still not quite enough to save us; not yet.

‘But now, why is it that at this moment in the presence of one of the most tremendous comets the world has ever seen, its broad scimitar hanging right athwart the long line of our beloved northern States, why is it that we people, almost alone here on the prairie, sleep and rise in peace? Why is it that at the mention of the foolish errors of the past, these plain men and women dare to smile?

‘Have we no cause to fear? Have we not seen disaster? Have we not known blight, and frost, and sorrow? At this very moment does not diphtheria invade our homes, and in the Republic is not civil war at least a possibility? Look at the comet, its burnished sword gleaming just above our heads and let once people begin to say, albeit with abated breath, “now then there *will be war*”, and who can estimate our natural consternation and alarm?

‘What saves us? Just one thing; the fact that in all the centuries past men unafraid have watched the skies and learned them until at last there was a place for Galileo and Copernicus, Kepler and Newton and Halley.

‘Go out now beneath the starry sky and answer; whence comes Donati’s comet, and whither does it go to shake from silver hair “diseases, pestilence, and war?” Who can answer? The astronomer, you say. Yes, the astronomer, but who is the astronomer? Just a plain man like you or me. You, if your eyes are good, can see all that the astronomer can see, if you only take

pains to look and labor to understand. For, be it understood, the astronomer has turned the tables on the comet; instead of its telling what shall happen to us, we tell what shall happen to it; we not only predict its destiny, but we read its past.

‘Be patient; permit me to tell you a little more; the “explanation” shall still be short.

‘Newton’s study of what we since call the law of gravitation made him think the comet of his time — 1680 — possibly obedient to law. William Penn, at that very time, evidently regardless of comets, as of the wrath of kings and bishops, was preparing a plat of a city for the new world, a city to be called of “brotherly love”, a plat soon to spread upon the ground beside the Delaware, the Philadelphia that we know. While Penn was studying cities, Newton was studying comets. His friend Halley, in 1682, when Penn was founding his city here, found a comet for that year, and applying Newton’s methods was able not only to know its pathway through the skies, but to recognize its identity with two other comets recorded by astronomers during the century and a half before. If this were true, he knew the comet’s time!

‘Halley’s comet has an orbit and, like a planet, like the earth, makes a regular journey around the sun. Only while the earth goes around in a single year, Halley’s comet travels farther and takes all of seventy-five. Halley knew this, knew it so well that he became a prophet. He said that Halley’s comet would return; it would appear in the heavens in the latter part of 1758, or early in 1759.

‘Friends, the comet kept faith! He did not live to greet it, but the comet came! Halley died in 1742; his

comet appeared in the sky almost at the appointed place, on Christmas night 1758! One hundred years ago next Christmas! So near are we to one of the greatest triumphs of the human mind. Marvelous, you say; no more marvelous prediction in the book of time!

‘The comet runs its round as does a planet; but friends, who first picked out the planets, the silver glowing disks, amid the swarming myriads of all fixed stars? Who did that? Who knew their movements, their goings, their return? His name remains unknown; probably must so remain forever. But *someone* did that thing; some man or men made that discovery by merely constant looking and reflecting upon the things they saw. Who were they? The Babylonians, the Chinese, the Egyptians, says history; but who were they? Who and what manner of men were these who made these primitive discoveries of the scientific world. Who were they?

‘Well, I will tell you who they were; in my mind’s eye I see them, through the dim centuries full of all confusion, I see them still, sitting yonder beneath the clear star-bespangled arches of the desert night; seated on the sloping hill-sides that gird the plains of Shinar. They are shepherds! Their flocks are safe in fold. Below them stretch far as eye can reach the gray fields of Babylon, where miles of irrigation streams send back their silver; the city perchance in the distance, angular, dark, and black. But overhead is glory, a brilliancy, a beauty which only the skies of desert show. The shepherds can not help but see it.

‘When shepherds keep their watch by night they stay awake! First they noted and learned the sweep of the vast silent host. They saw it follow the declining sun; night after night, night after night, moon after moon;

year after year, the splendor moved; certain brightest stars first on the horizon, then overhead, then disappearing in the west and the watch was ended — it was dawn!

‘In these October nights when from my window I look out across the valley to the west, I see the great square of Pegasus sliding down the skies and I know that dawn is near; just as the shepherds looked and knew thousands of years ago; I rejoice! I sympathize with those shepherds across the forgotten centuries; they are kin of mine; I almost clasp their hands. I would fain spend nights with them, night after night that they might tell all they saw and knew. For they, it was, as I think, who simply by long continued observation, first made out the grouping of the stars, their constancy, groups circling the pole, groups rising in order as the sun went down; they first read the zodiac, the pathway of the worlds, and within it saw the movements, not of the moon alone, but of the morning and evening stars, the planets five. The Greeks are called the fathers of astronomy because with them recorded work begins; but all evidence seems to show that almost every constellation, not in the zodiac alone — which is the clock-dial of the skies — but in all the northern heavens, bore then the name it bears to-night.

‘Nowadays, where do we find these names? Where, do you think? Of all places in the world! In the mouth of the gilded scamp whose scarlet wagon stands in summer in the shade of the cottonwood tree, whose torch at nightfall flares and smokes to spoil the evening air. That humbug son of darkness knows the zodiac, and his glib but treacherous tongue can run the constellations through. Nay, worse than that, in every almanac that hangs beside the chimney-wall at least one page is given

up to fraud. There the names of the constellations twelve are spread, illustrated with nameless indication of service to mankind. Astrology we have on the prairie, not astronomy — astrology, organized credulity and black ignorance that would, as with the smudge of torch-light, extinguish the very stars.

‘But, the ancient shepherds, and the mariners, too, later on, looked on the stars with gratitude and joy, yes, with singing and so answered back the stars of morning; but amid the vast multitudes of people less alert, in the night of heathenism, all these songs became incantations — no longer the melody of morning, but the cry of the nocturnal spoiler, the sad echo of human woe.

‘Nevertheless, through Greece and Italy and Spain with the Arabs the truth came filtering down, and, since Galileo, far as concerns the stars, the gospel of fear is dead. We rejoice to see the comet, and even the black-art of a heathen almanac, though published in Philadelphia or Boston, shall not shut us from the beauty of the skies!

‘It is this intellectual inheritance, this heritage of intellectual wealth, from the clear thinking of unknown men so long ago, that makes us rich to-night, delivers us from fear.

‘Think you those men of old, slowly mastering the facts of the nightly sky, were afraid? Oh no! Not they, not when they began to know, and as they knew! They soon learned that fear comes not from the skies but from the earth, from wild beast and beast-like men. The stars were not only innocent, but helpful; for men in Syria especially, as we all know, the “morning stars sang together”. The man who framed that phrase of beauty used well the nightly skies; for him the “bands

of Orion'' held in fact, and the sweet influence of the Pleiades was for him. He was not afraid; he loved!

'Friends: perhaps I have not explained the comet, have the rather told you how to use it; I would have you open a window toward the sky. It gets dark on the prairie, sometimes. Mr. Ramsgate reminds us we are face to face with winter long and cold. It grows rather close and stuffy for us all down here sometimes, and we need every open window we can get, lest we faint!'

The Squire did not look up; but as he uttered this remark, the people turned their heads, to see if perhaps the windows had indeed been closed. They were open; the orator went on:

'One evening, some time ago, Mr. Lyon and I went over to visit Father Blew. He read to us from one of his books, explaining as he read. I recall but a few lines; these because he read them more than once. They struck my fancy; and for some time as I have been thinking over what to say to you to-night the lines kept coming to my mind:

Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine;
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.

Friends, that sounds very fine to me; brings back Walnut Street and its theatre. We have no theatre like that in Iowa; but over all these prairies, even above this little schoolhouse, hath not God set His theatre for all the sons of men!

'Sometimes when all goes wrong, when the wheat blights in the field, and the frost falls on unripened corn,

when diphtheria invades our cabin homes, and from advancing winter the marshalled wild fowl fly southward, crying through the night, and the darkness of discouragement threatens, I go out and stand before the northern sky, while speaks to me the most famous of ancient shepherds; "what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him!" Friends, after the music, as you go out, look up and see the comet and realize that in its presence, man is "but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor", because — because he *understands!*'

As the speaker turned to sit down, there rose instant, but by no means general applause; many seemed to sit quiet, wondering — wondering what was proper. Not so the leader of the band. Was not that gentleman already on his feet, leading the applause indeed, but making a motion at the same time that the music of the program be omitted, but that the speaker be asked to step outside, if he will, and point out for us all something of what he sees! 'Never heard such a speech in my life', he said.

The motion carried with a shout; the Squire, however, shook his head; 'I came to share the program, not to spoil it', he said. 'The boys have brought us music, the people wait outside; let us have some music.'

McQ, however, insisted, saying that they intended 'only a piece or two.' He would now give one. After that everybody should go outside and see the stars anyway. Then the program would end with one more number.

The first piece of music proved to be *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The band rose and the leader asked the people to sing the first stanza. 'Natural-born sing-

ing-master, that little Welshman is', whispered Mrs. Ramsgate. Did she notice, perchance, her husband silent?

The splendor of the prospect was unsurpassed because unsurpassable. The polar star groups, obedient to their center, at reverent distance did obeisance, glowed and burned, and all the suns of autumn night stood in radiant glory — Vega and Altair, Deneb, Albireo, and far-off Fomalhaut — all these could the Squire distinguish, and to his little audience point out, returning again and again to the groups about the pole where, lingering still, the comet's silver banner stretched its shining field, far to the low horizon of the west where Arcturus with his sons had just now disappeared.

To grace the whole display Venus was evening star, waiting, however, only to be identified and say 'good night' as she passed below the prairie's misty rim. But her close companion, beautiful, ruddy Mars, stayed the exhibition through, and saw even the very latest stargazer safe to his home that night.

Howbeit, it must be recorded that our first and only lesson in astronomy was not prolonged. The Squire was tired, and presently, with the remark that 'the constellations make their best display in early spring', he excused himself and joined his daughter in the house, while promptly at the door appeared Brother McQ with the prairie band, and as the weird strains of the *Men of Harlach* sounded far across the star-lit hills, the little audience melted away.

Once the Squire concluded his demonstration, Miss Blew and her friend hastened to express their thanks, and immediately set out for home, *both* silent — Miss Blew surprised. Perhaps our critic intends for once to

reverse her form, thought she, and that will take time. On they went, but at length the critic spoke.

‘I did like what the Squire showed us; that was new to me. I used to hear Pap’s brother talk about lions and bears and other animals among the stars, but I thought, like a good many other things plain folks can not see, the most of it was make-believe. And so to-night, I didn’t see the swan or the eagle, but I did see for once the dipper. That I think I could find again if I could tell up there which way is north. I can tell now the direction on the ground because I am used to it, and know where the neighbors live, but when I look up it’s all one mess. I always did wonder though, why we folks here in Iowa don’t have north, south, east, and west, the same as in Indiana; Pap says we do, but he can’t tell why. I *know* they do *not*, and I tell him that when you know anything you don’t have to tell why. But what the Squire said at last about the stars, I just thought was for poetry-like.

‘They may be all right to look at but what possible use are they? There isn’t light enough to do any good; the moon is worth all of them. Even the peddler to-night has to have his torch to count his change under the cottonwood tree.

‘We have an almanac in the house, so has everybody, I suppose. How would anybody tell what time it is, if the almanac didn’t say what time the sun comes up so as we can set the clock? We people all have the same almanac, and that makes the time the same, only a little faster or slower.

‘There are two stars though that I do like; one is the evening star; the first one that comes out just when the sun goes down in summer, when the housework’s almost

done. I sit down and see the men coming in from the field. The other is the morning star: it's kind of company for me when I am churning in the cool of the morning, back of the house, just before the sun comes up. It looks as if it had just been lit. The whole skyful scares me just enough so as I don't like it, but I think the Squire gets something out of it all, don't you Miss Blew?'

'The Squire thinks', said Miss Blew, 'that because man can understand the skies he is their superior; he is no more afraid. Knowledge and understanding shall one day master fear, then shall humanity be crowned!'

Just then at the parting of the ways Mr. Ramsgate joined the ladies, and although her friends offered to attend her, Miss Blew went on alone.

The straight pickets of her door-yard fence gleamed in unusual whiteness. Overhung by tufted Virginia creeper, the small panes of her cottage windows stared bare, and black and grey; the door was unlocked she knew; she entered and was not afraid!

Half an hour later, a solitary old gentleman sought the self-same starlit path down the familiar slope. But as he crossed the bridge and turned to seek his own, he saw burning behind the nearest window-pane, a tiny, taper flame. He knew. He smiled, and in one instant all concern for stars and comets even from his meditative spirit slipped utterly away!

XXXIII

INDIAN CORN

It was the settled opinion of Father Blew that in human experience there is far more good than evil, if we take the trouble to discover it. He made no attempt to explain the constitution of the world, or to answer its Why? — said he had not the necessary data; but continually he did affirm that the good things were natural things; in consequence, unmarked. That only nature is good, he thought a matter of common but unnoted experience. ‘The bad’, he said, ‘is the unexpected, the abnormal, unusual.’*

In all this our friend was perhaps borrowing from Pascal, all without knowing it. It is recalled that a tiny copy of the *Pensées* was found among his books; and it is easily remembered that he was an unwearied reader; his thought perhaps almost as much a product of his books, as his brain of daily food; and what must have been the luxury of such mental assimilation!

However this may be, it is certain that all Father Blew’s love of peace, all the solace of his philosophy, all the steadfastness of his faith, were not a whit too much, when it came to retaining for the community that evenness of spirit, unfailing gentleness and equipoise, needed in the fall of ’59. Everything then seemed wrong. The year was cold, the crops were poor, prices low, money none, land-values all down, the ’55-ers go-

* Rien n’est plus commun que les bonnes choses; il n’est question que les discerner, et il est bien certain qu’elles sont toutes naturelles et à notre portée et même connues de tout le monde. Mais, on ne sait pas les distinguer. — Pascal’s *Pensées*.

ing home, while the political situation grew worse from week to week.

'It looks bad', said Father Blew. 'We'll try the lyceum once again; give the people some new things to think about, if possible.'

But partisan spirit ran high; no Republican would vote for the Squire, and no Democrat for anybody else. Whom *can* we have for president? Father Blew did not know; but Mrs. Lyon one day came to his help.

'Why not reëlect the Doctor? With his declamatory contests, spelling-schools, and concerts, he has done so very well!'

Sure enough! at the first meeting, procedure unknown before, Dr. Willowbush was reëlected, 'unanimous', as Mrs. Ramsgate reported. Miss Barclay, our new teacher, became *ex officio* secretary.

In due time the program for the first formal meeting, on October fourteenth, was announced. McQ was to be the speaker, his first appearance in such a rôle; his subject, 'Indian Corn'. Mrs. Lyon was to have something on the same subject, while Miss Barclay was to recite 'The Huskers'. In short, the evening was to be devoted to the praise of Indian corn, and specimens were to be shown and discussed.

The mere announcement of the subject justified for Father Blew its choice. For days politics were laid to sleep; everybody knew about corn, and early gave it to be understood that he would be out to 'hear what the Welshman had to say'; so that presently a second announcement became necessary, to the effect that owing to interest in the subject, and in order to have room for all, the basement of the new Hillside church would be the meeting-place.

The evening was clear and cold; but Simpson's generosity had provided fuel, and every one found himself comfortable and happy. Had not each ambitious farmer brought samples? And round the walls on every side were not rival corn-stalks standing to reach the ceiling? The interest was simply unexampled; are not the common things on the prairie after all the good ones! Who ever saw anything better than this?

Before his gratified audience our warm-hearted physician lost nothing of his suavity. He thanked his friends for the courtesy of this second election; he had not sought the honor, but accepted it as indicating their approval of last year's program. He believed we could not do better than to go forward along similar lines again. He noticed with pleasure that on this our first program declamation had a place, and assured the new teacher that if she 'would only start a class in elocution, she would soon have every bright boy of the prairie on her string.'

The applause that ensued almost discomfited the blushing Miss Barclay; but she kept her wits and, once the noise subsided, handed the president a slip of paper for the first number of the evening.

'The very first thing is a declamation', said the delighted chairman, 'and our secretary is the speaker! What could be finer! Her subject is, "The Huskers"; I have no doubt there are many of them here, but it is safe to say she has no one particularly in mind. Miss Barclay: "The Huskers".'

The recitation was simplicity itself; Miss Barclay seemed wholly concerned with the poet's meaning. 'She didn't seem to catch the rhyme', said Mrs. Ramsgate, 'but then hers wasn't the singing part.' That lady's

daughters were, to be sure, concerned in that, and by way of music, gave forthwith, to the tune of 'Waring', selected stanzas of a corn-song.

'Now we're to *see* some corn', said the president. 'It speaks volumes for this land of liberty that we have to-night a Welshman, a man who has escaped the bondage of Wales and the Welsh dialect, here to tell us about our favorite crop! The lyceum welcomes all foreigners that can speak good English. Our secretary will announce the subject.'

'Indian Corn and the Development Theory; Mr. Robert McQ', said the secretary.

Mr. McQ took his place behind the small table beside the genial chairman.

'Mr. President, ladies, and gentlemen: I assure you I hesitated a good while before consenting to stand here this evening. But Father Blew asked it, and you know what we all like to do when he makes the request. It is something of presumption for a stranger to talk to an American audience about an American plant. Permit me to say, however, that the only bondage feared by a Welshman to-day is that of ignorance; and so for two or three years I have been studying Indian corn.

'I have also to remark that if I say that my subject is "corn", I do *not* speak good English. In English, corn means grain; one may speak of a corn of wheat, a barley-corn, even a pepper-corn, and the Puritans said rightly, "Indian-corn". The English name for this grain is maize, the name used by the people from whom Columbus received the first specimens seen in Europe. Maize is your word, if you want to talk English.

'On the ship that brought me to this country I met a man who said he was an American, who asked me a

great deal about Ireland and Wales. When I attempted to answer his questions, he constantly interrupted me by exclaiming, "I want to know!" I finally told him that I took that for granted, and if he would be patient I would tell him all I could!

'I assure you I was glad when my hearer at last grew tired and went away; but Mrs. Lyon assures me that the poor fellow was really doing the best he could; that such was simply his way of expressing appreciation!

'I have often thought of that strange expression since. Seriously, we all "want to know". Curiosity is a part of our mental make-up. Children are proverbially given to curiosity; and I can testify for one, that we never cease to be children in this respect. We repress the impulse, but we still "want to know". We want to know everything about us, about the plants as well as the planets; about the stones and the stars. Squire Marks would like to see the other side of the moon, always turned from us; and all over the world men try to find out how God made it.

'There is surely no irreverence in inquiry; honest research is the spirit's life. So let us try to satisfy as we may a reasonable curiosity about Indian corn, and see what else may come of it.

'I have here a fine ear. This is comparable to a spike of barley or wheat. The grain is the individual, single seed; a grain of corn is nothing but a seed. But a seed is the beginning of a new plant. Sometimes it is almost a new plant. The bean, for example, shows two halves as we know; really two thick leaves, and a little germ, as it is called, tucked in at one side. When we plant a bean and it grows, the leaves actually come up above ground, and turn green to show us what they are; and

one can see that the little germ has grown to form a root in one direction, and stretched up to make a stem and new leaves in the other.

‘The corn also has a germ. Every farmer knows that. It lies just under the skin in the white groove on the front of the kernel. Before he plants seed-corn, a farmer tests it. With his pocket-knife he uncovers the germ, and by its appearance he can tell whether or not it will grow, *i.e.*, whether he has good seed. With a magnifying glass you may see the germ very well indeed. There is just one tiny leaf, directed up; when the corn is planted this one leaf after a while appears above the ground. Rolled close within it, the top of a second may be seen, and then as growth goes on, one leaf after another comes to view, until the set entire appears, half-a-dozen or more, all at about the same level. Then the stem above the ground begins to grow; stage after stage, the tower proceeds to rise; joint by joint it goes; each joint bearing now its leaf predestined, the lower half, sheath-like clasping the stalk just above; as we see here (showing a leafy stalk) and so on story by story, section by section; the lower stout and strong, the upper diminishing, until rises the highest, a slender graceful shaft, fitted to bear no heavy leaf at all, but bloom instead, light, feathery blossoms shot out to spray, an open tassel; such pennants happy workmen might fling out to mark a structure finished.

‘Finished? Far from that! “The corn’s in tassel”; it is in bloom; the game is but well-started. But before going on with that let us see one other thing; note the stalk I hold in hand; what does this mean? Do you note these spikes about the base of the stalk, thrust out? They form a whorl of roots, starting some distance

above the ground, but destined to meet and pierce it quickly, in a circle several inches in diameter above the jointed stem. What are these? These are braces. While we have been watching the leaves, the forming shaft diminishing in weight and thickness toward the top, here, next the ground, everything is quite the reverse; everything here has been stiffening, actually bracing itself, growing stouter every hour, as if for burden too heavy to be borne.

‘And is not such provision well? The slender stem shot up so swift, so high, has it not weight to carry? Here, scarce mid-way to the top, appears a branch, a leafy branch, leafy to the very tip, its stem-sections very short, and the leaves—well, they seem to be sheaths, mostly. The leaf-blades are very small, as you see; but the sheaths, close-hug the heavy, clumsy branch, soon to be heavier still, and all ends up at last with tufts of “silk”. On stalks about the room the silk is dry to-night, and brown. Not many weeks ago the threads were colorless, or maybe tinged with red or green; in August sun they shone and glistened. This summer-branch shall be the ear.’

At this point someone in the house spoke out, ‘We all know that’. Tradition is that it was Mordecai Cropper who spoke. He was a ‘fifty-fiver’.

‘Good!’ exclaimed McQ, ‘I’m glad you do; that makes it all the better; I’m glad there’s one man paying attention; all true investigation starts with what we know. Now we can go on to what we want to know.’

This, of course, awakened the crowd and the applause was vigorous; they had really seemed to enjoy what the man was saying, even if they did not know all about it, of which some were doubtful since they had never heard

such a story before. The president rose and reminded the audience that the speaker must not be interrupted; that anything of that sort was 'likely to interrupt the course of treatment, and might lead to graver symptoms!'

But McQ hastened to remark that a question or criticism briefly put, did not bother him a bit; he much preferred that to inattention or other forms of somnolence!

When quiet came, he went on to tell the further story of the branch that 'will become an ear'. He said that 'if you look at it when it starts, you find the tip of the branch, all tight-wrapped in leaves, simply a small white cone, about like the tip of your little finger. This soon grows, lengthens, and you find it covered from base to tip with rows of small, shining, transparent little knobs, as if set with pearls. To each of these growing pearls belongs a thread of silk, and at length, when the ear is well shaped out, and stands quite free — when all is ready — the tufted silk-threads all come forth from the now open tip and are here dusted well with pollen. The stimulus from the pollen starts every pearl to effort new; to the development of a germ, and the final shaping of a grain of corn.

'What pollen is will soon be seen', the speaker said. 'Each pearl becomes a grain, a seed, and in each seed a germ; don't forget that!

'The ears, now quite rapidly enlarge, grow heavy, and by and by, under August's sun, nor less beneath the quiet shining stars, begin to droop, pendent at last. Squire Marks says, through a whole half-circle are they sweep; they start straight up; now, straight down they swing, weighing a pound or more. The ripened stem supports the load with ease; is it not braced? Only the

storm-wind can overturn the fine equipoise and balance of a stalk of corn!

‘At last, after all the alternating drought, and shower, and heat of summer — at last, after the frost and glorious sun of autumn with the soft drying winds, here’s what we get!’

The speaker held up a beautiful, almost perfect ear of yellow corn. ‘Isn’t it fine? Said not the Master well: “First the blade and then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear?”’ Does not that sum up in three words all that I have said? Isn’t it *fine*?’ And again he held up the golden ear, and half-a-dozen more tied together by white husks, in pairs; and his audience applauded again and again, while Mr. Snyder and Mr. Simpson and the chairman trimmed the candles.

‘The fact is’, said Mr. McQ, ‘a stalk of corn is a very wonderful thing. What procedure is this that, starting from a single grain, lifts from the ground a stem ten feet high, determining all along leaf after leaf, each in its form and place; hanging out safely at one side a heavy weight; and yet preserves the poise, all to accomplish a purpose plain. What word describes what we have seen?’

‘Growth’, exclaimed Webster Kibbutz, ‘the grain grows; that’s what does it!’

People smiled. They were surprised; but Webster was in serious earnest; he made mistakes sometimes, but so did the rest of us; he was learning! Besides, did he not sit this evening beside Miss Cropper; that of itself bespoke courage, and may have prompted manly exhibit.

The speaker was not disturbed; he went right on. ‘That was well said, Webster; you said what probably

all were thinking. If corn-seed did not grow, there would be no corn-stalk, that is certain. But Mr. Kibbutz and every farmer will recall that the grain of corn as such does not grow; only the germ does that; the rest all disappears. We say rightly, seeds germinate; it is always the germ that grows and makes the new stalk, whatever happens to the rest of the seed placed in the ground. In fact the germ is a plant, it alone grows.

‘But there is more to tell. The germ, the little plant, no sooner starts than it begins to change in other ways than size. For instance, it turns green when it gets out of the ground. Then once the leaves are well-shaped, perfected, they grow no more; the stalk stops growing to build the tassel, and once the ear is formed there is no more growing anywhere. Frost or no frost, the work is done; the stalk presently stands dry and brown in the autumn field.

‘It is quite plain now, I think, that to describe all this we need another word, a word meaning more than does the word *grow*; the word we need is *develop*: the little germ not only *grows* into a larger plant, but *changes*, as it grows, into a *complete* plant, with braces, leaves, and flowers, and fruit.

‘But further; just as our corn-stalk here sprang from a tiny, simple germ, a diminutive plantlet with beginning root and stem, just so has the germ itself developed from something simpler, smaller still; Chambers says from one single cell, so small that we could see it only with a microscope. Such development takes place when the grain is forming in the ear months before the seed is planted! Thus the germ of ’58 gave us this stalk of ’59. The grains on the ears before us will, if planted, contribute to the harvest of ’60 as all men know.

'Nature always looks forward to another year; no hesitation, no sign of stopping, marks her triumphant course; note it well! No "world's end" in sight at her horizon-limit! No!

'So much for development. Most of it, we all can see; it is a fact, a definite fact. It is something we can grasp; so that, even though unexplained, the fact is plain. Development is a fact. Now for theory: in the first place, what is theory?'

The speaker briefly explained that a theory was a guess, an opinion, an attempt to explain something not immediately clear. He illustrated by a story of certain farmers who came upon a pile of hay beside the prairie trail, and began to wonder how it came there. 'The load was badly built; part slipped off', said one. 'No, the whole load went over', said another. 'The road is slanting, the driver couldn't without help put it all on again; he had to leave part, and here it is.' A third man had meantime found a wheel lying off by itself. 'The driver', he said, 'had a break-down, and he had to throw off part of his load and fix his wagon; but how did he fix it? Come to look at it, the wheel is "dished"; he either borrowed somewhere a wheel, or used a pole. He had help. He got a long pole, fastened the rear axle on that; then tying the big end in front he left the small end to drag behind, and drove off. Can't you see the pole-mark where it dragged? He never threw any hay back; it lies just as he threw it.' All this was so satisfactory that the investigation ceased.

'Here', said Mr. McQ, 'each man had a theory, based on *fact observed*; only the third had *seen* more. Too readily they all agreed. They were too soon satisfied. Right as far as they found fact; had they sought fur-

ther, they might have found other facts to modify their theory again. They should have inquired why the driver left his wheel?’

‘He didn’t’, came a voice from the crowd, ‘he didn’t, he fetched home his wheel, and he brought the load home with a bob under the back axle. It was our Hosie had that load!’

When the laughter subsided, Mr. McQ went on, ‘Fine, Mrs. Ramsgate, fine! This all helps the illustration. But, so much may serve to-night to give a notion of what a theory is. Really, everybody makes theories; we infer, and our inference is supposed to explain the facts we do have; to connect them up, make them understandable and give us mental satisfaction. So far as a theory agrees with fact, its statement sets out truth.

‘Now from corn we have an idea of development; and from what has just been said, we gain the notion of theory. We may put this and that together; a development-theory then becomes simply an inference concerning development. From what we know about yellow corn we may infer that any corn will grow in the same way; and such we find to be the case; and the question rises if corn always begins with but one single cell, do not other plants begin in just that same way? Mr. Chambers says they surely do. And he goes further; he says that every animal has a similar beginning! Every animal, he says, takes rise from just one cell!’

‘What is a cell?’ asked someone. It was Mr. Clotworthy Burnie, another “fifty-fiver” who was closely watching the proceedings. He was sometimes accused of writing articles to the newspapers.

Mr. McQ expressed his pleasure in that question; he took from the table a packet and opening it held up a

large corn-tassel pressed quite flat. 'Now we're ready for pollen', he said.

The lights were all freshly trimmed, as tapping the tassel with his finger, the speaker shook out a cloud of dust fine as flour, so abundant as to be distinctly visible, obscuring the speaker as he said: 'This dust is pollen, you find it in all flowers, more of it in some than others, abundant you see in corn. The tassel, you know, is the bloom of the corn — many small flowers. Every distinct particle I shake out is a single cell, says the man with the microscope. The experiment shows very little; but it gives you at least an idea of the size of a cell. Cells are just minute particles of living matter.

'The pollen grains that a few weeks ago dusted all the field and fell, of course, on the corn-silk were living cells. That is why they started the growth that made the germ down in the pearly, new-forming grain in the growing ear, as I told you. Now you have the whole story. These pollen-grains are all dry now and dead. I dried this tassel to send to my gardener-father back in Wales. He has never seen a stalk of corn.

'Now keep in mind that in all I have said so far, I am dealing with fact; everybody will admit that a stalk of corn starts with one cell and comes to what we see. All this is a history, not theory: but we are coming very near the development-theory that all the learned men in Europe are talking about, have been talking about for many years. Chambers' book is fifteen years old! There have been other students beside Chambers; but before I mention these let us clear up the table.

'We have, as everybody knows, several sorts of corn. Here are yellow field-corn, white-corn, sweet-corn, pop-corn.'

As he spoke Mr. McQ held up the ears exclaiming: 'How beautiful they are! the small slender pop-corn with its shining grains like settings of pearl; the sugar-corn with its wrinkled face, less beautiful, but not less interesting in its curious quality; field-corn in gold and white and sometimes ruby, for in husking I often find red ears. Sometimes the ears are mixed, crossed, as we say, red and yellow, some blue and white. I suppose if we planted red seed we might soon have a field of red corn.

'But now, all our corn is cultivated! There is no wild corn that I know of. The sorts we have in hand are the result of cultivation! They are varieties only; not species the gardener says, because they mix. Every boy knows he must plant his pop-corn far from his father's field, or it will be spoiled; and the father knows he must not bring the field-corn too close to the garden fence, or there will be no roasting-ears, for all the careful selection and planting of sweet-corn seed by the thrifty wife. But who cultivated these varieties of corn? Who tilled the fields and brought them to their beauty? Well, the brown people we call Indians seem to have accomplished this thing. They originated these varieties, as Dutchmen once originated tulips.

'So far as I see, the people of this country have very little idea what great corn-growers those poor Indians were, nor how much we owe to Indian women, who toiled in the fields and kept the corn-crop growing; kept the grain, the variety, in existence century after century, each nation faithful to its own, finally handing to us these beautiful things. In New England the Puritans found sometimes a thousand acres at a time, small, 8-rowed corn; and John Clotworthy tells us that his

father at Defiance, Ohio, was with Anthony Wayne's soldiers when they destroyed the Indian corn-fields for "*fifty miles* along the Maumee River!" Sad enough!

'That was yellow field-corn; white-corn and pop-corn are from the South; sweet-corn from Pennsylvania, so I am told. But not one of these is like that Columbus received; that seems to have been small, the ears only two or three inches long, white, spotted with blue, probably such your soldiers saw in the Mexican War. Mr. Eaton will tell you; he was with General Scott, you know. So that all the corn we know is cultivated, domesticated, so to say. Wild corn is unknown, unless the Mexican kind is the wild form; it might be near it.

'Our varieties of corn all mix; *i.e.*, they cross with one another so they probably started some time from one form and have become varieties in cultivation as pansies and roses do. But in our botany books you will find corn, wheat, barley, etc., all the cultivated grains, listed with the *grasses*. Why? Because they *are* grasses. They all have the same kind of leaf, the same kind of flower, a single seed from a flower, the same kind of germ; and when the seed grows, they all send up at first, each a slender little leaf, one so like another that no one can tell which grass it is. Ask Mr. Morris what trouble he and Father Blew had, the first time they planted sorghum-seed, to know it when it came up — for sorghum is a grass too. Nobody could tell whether it was sorghum, or fox-tail, or something else that was coming abundantly in the rows where the seed was planted. You men know, for you all went to see what was going on.

'Now the theory of development would say that all grasses are fixed varieties of some old original grass,

perhaps long since disappeared. That would explain what we see; that theory explains the fact; none other does.

‘I have no time to-night to tell you more of this, but note this. Since all other groups of plants show similar connections and variations and tell the same story, and furthermore, since the same thing appears to be true in the animal world, and since, therefore, so far as known, all animals and plants alike start out each with just one cell, and by its orderly development proceed to all the perfection of maturity, we think we know the method of God’s creative work as it goes on now, year by year, before our very eyes!

‘But having gone so far, men in these later days begin to shape a wider theory, as if to suggest the method of creation as a whole in all past years. Nobody knows, nobody ever knew by any sort of experience, *how* God made the Universe, or even the solid planet, or the living world in all its splendor; but we are certainly privileged to use such data as we do possess to infer, to learn whatever we can! “We want to know!”

‘Moses, in the Book of Genesis, sets out the fact of Creation as giving origin to the world; but of the method of creation, he says almost nothing. Hugh Miller, recently deceased, one of the founders of modern geology, thinks that inspiration came to Moses in the form of successive visions, tableaux, each vision the record of a creative day, a period of indefinite length, representing indeed, as Miller thinks, a geologic age.

‘Furthermore, the record of the rocks which Miller brought to light shows that, whether of animal or plant, the simpler forms came first in time; then those more complex as the ages moved along; the highest, finest,

coming last. Chambers thinks the rocks suggest a continuous development from lowest to highest like to the development we have seen in the growth of corn. Chambers wrote *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, and Miller wrote the *Footprints of the Creator* to meet it. Having the same facts before him to which Chambers makes appeal, Miller insists the procedure was not continuous, but that the close of each geologic period marked the end of a creative day; so that a new creation ever ushered in the next period of geologic time.

‘These writers were religious men; both from Scotland, Presbyterians perhaps. When people criticized Chambers he said he but proposed to find a “certain method in His working.” But have there not been other theories to tell the manner of God’s working? Lamarek, a great French student, impressed by the fact that forms in nature, structurally almost alike, are often in habit very different, offered a theory of adaptation. He was laughed out of court! Ridicule is poor argument!

‘An older theory of creative method was that of the poet Milton. Look at it for yourselves in *Paradise Lost*, Book VII. Milton simply enlarged upon the Book of Genesis. For him all forms of land-life appear rising from the ground as do the plants! Strange enough! But with the waters it was different: they bred the life they now display; marshes and swamps, the same. But, what do you think! Milton has fish spring from *fry*; reptiles, frogs, toads, and the like, from *spawn*, and birds from *eggs*! He started these things all in forms the simplest his knowledge could suggest! Had he lived at this day, he had no doubt, joined Chambers, and started each with a single cell! Who this time is the greatest poet, Miller, Chambers, or Milton?

‘But you say, we have wandered far from the Iowa corn-stalk with which we started. No, not very far. The great things in this world, I find, are simple things too. A boy’s kite in Franklin’s hand solved the problem of the storm, the lightning. We use it now, and by to-morrow morning have the news of Washington or Boston; and Cyrus Field, I think, will yet make the sun almost stand still while he puts a “girdle round the earth” in less than “forty minutes”. Apples fall to earth; but Newton says gravitation, and matches the moon, which is bound to earth by bonds invisible in its glorious round. Nor less the planets and the sun; even Donati’s comet dashing sun-ward as we all last year could see, only to fly swift to some other far extreme, is bound by universal law. So with the stalk of corn. Why should we be surprised if when we know its story, lo! the eons of Creation stretch before us working out in infinite and inexhaustible patience the far-reaching thoughts of God?

‘In studies such as these, two things I find. In the first place, as intelligent beings made in His image, we must expect the unfolding of the human spirit, the widening of human thought as knowledge makes increase. A theory is a view: its value is two-fold. It explains facts at hand and leads to new inquiry; otherwise it may or may not have practical value. Franklin’s kite set lightning-rods around the world; but whether Newton be right or wrong, whether La Place be right or wrong, mariners at sea still watch the stars, and guide their ships at sea as in millenia gone by. Whether Galileo be right or wrong, for us on the prairie the sun will still “rise in the east” morning by morning, and at even in these western level prairies hide his light,

quite as for men of old he sank at night-fall in the levels of an unknown sea!

‘And so to-night whatever we may think of the corn-stalk, whatever theories of nature we may spin or slight, our practice will probably continue much the same. The year ’58 was good for comets and not very good for anything else. This year is a little better but not much. Iowa lands are down; we’ve had early frost; our corn this year is soft; and we are poor. Perhaps we shall have more uniform and better crops when once we know more about our prairie lands, and our wonderful Indian corn.

Who loves not knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper. Who shall fix
Her pillars? *Let her work prevail!*

As the speaker took his seat the applause was almost purely perfunctory. It was led by Father Blew and the Squire and followed then by others through the room. The first part of the speech had given pleasure; the latter part few understood, perhaps, although they were very patient and very quiet.

While the lights received attention, the chairman expressed pleasure in ‘the argument to which we have just listened. The unity of the animal world is so far admitted. The higher animals especially, as is generally known, all develop in much the same way, and in fact, suffer many similar complaints! Just *how* many species have had a similar origin in something else; that must probably always remain a theory.

‘I do not agree with people who think that because the Bible does not mention things, therefore we are not to know them. We know many things not mentioned

in Scripture. The Bible says nothing about America; but it is generally admitted that *we* came to know about it pretty nearly in the nick of time to save the liberties of men. At any rate, we ought to have inquiring minds, fearing *coma*! Next number', said the chairman.

'“The Warriors of the Prairie”, by Mrs. Lyon', said the secretary.

Mrs. Lyon was greeted with applause, long-continued, but very respectful. She stood for some time holding her paper; unable to speak. Had she not been in all the years the servant of the community? Had she not willingly entertained their guests, nor less befriended every neighbor? Every newcomer knew her welcome, nor had her hand been stretched out the less to help younger people, beginning now, here and there, new homes, upon the prairie. Mrs. Lyon was popular!

When her neighbors finally gave the lady opportunity to speak, she read, not without effort, but very quietly her simple verses. Whatever they may have meant to other people, to her they meant much; and her listeners were so very quiet that the slight rustle of the wind-stirred corn-leaves around the walls seemed whisper reprehensible.

THE WARRIORS OF THE PRAIRIE

They are marshalled on the hill-top, they are ranked along the
plain,

Their files flash in the sunlight nor heed the cloud nor rain;
No hush of evening breaks their lines, nor dawn of dewy morn,
Vast armies of the prairie, the fields of gleaming corn.

Their banners shine in luster that only sunlight weaves;
The music that they follow is the rustle of the leaves,
The clinking of the bobolink where meadow-sedges blow,
The trumpet of the thunder when the storm-cloud hovers low.

Navarre with crested helmet ne'er matched these waving plumes;
The silks that shine among them outglisten India's looms;
Banner and plume and pennant in knightly verdure dressed,
The broderie of fleur-de-lis half-hidden, half-expressed.

No blood-drop in the furrow, no sword uplifted high,
No rattle of the musket or voice of them that cry;
Only the ploughshare murmurs stirring the fragrant loam;
Only the stalking plover pipes low his harvest home.

For all these fair battalions the merry children sing,
And curious run the ranks among and gifts of summer bring;
The captain muses in the field; he walks the ranks along;
The bees are on the asters, but he noteth not their song.

Sure as the night and morning these armies *all* shall win;
The hour is fast advancing that brings the triumph in;
Then — vanish the silent warriors; vanish the waving plume;
Gone be the silken splendor! Gone with the summer's bloom!

But — shout for that wondrous army! Shout for its gifts of
peace!

Far may its banners brighten, its legions still increase;
No poverty, no sorrow can make us quite forlorn,
Our hope, our health, our glad content, march with our files
of corn.

For the conclusion, her hearers were not at all prepared. It came so soon. The reader seemed just a little startled at what she had done; she stood still a moment ere she slipped quietly to her place. The applause, usually so generous for every number, this time nearly failed. Father Blew clapped his hands, indeed, but his clapping seldom made much noise. The people sat quiet. Only after a minute or two of suspense, did a familiar voice speak up: 'I heard all that, every word, but I'd like to have it read another time. It was all about corn, of course, but there were some things about music and about weaving that I did not understand,

though I like both; and they used to go together when I was a girl; yes they did; my father was a weaver!’

This broke the spell; applause was abundant — perhaps for Mrs. Ramsgate — until the doctor rapped for order and proceeded to the formal adjournment. Then the people once set free, simply swarmed about their poetic neighbor as if to smother her with their good wishes until she was compelled to call Mr. Lyon to the rescue. ‘Oh, do take me home!’

The crowd then quickly disappeared. As to general interest manifested in what Brother McQ had said, any timid conservative must have been entirely satisfied; there was none! Our generous president, Mr. Dennis, William Ramsgate, the Squire, and Father Blew, waited their departure; then, with the pastor of the little church, who had been all this time talking to McQ, they took seats again and went over with the speaker the argument of the evening, with readings from Chambers and Hugh Miller. The concensus of opinion, as Father Blew reported, was to the effect that Chambers was not as clear as might be, but the facts he cited were very striking. His statement that among plants ‘Nature abounds in new varieties’, was a surprise to all, but McQ seemed not surprised at all; said sports appeared every summer in his father’s gardens, and new varieties of roses and pansies and primroses were offered by gardeners of England every year.

‘I wish you would find me a variety of corn that wouldn’t freeze at first frost’, said Mr. Ramsgate; ‘what we want is a kind of corn that will grow in Iowa!’

‘Try the eight-rowed sort, of New England’, said McQ; ‘it ripens earlier.’

‘Doesn’t give the yield’, said Mr. Ramsgate.

‘What I want’, said Mr. Dennis, ‘is a better climate! I don’t mean a milder one; I mean just a plain, better one. I never could think it right that frost should come along in September and freeze all our corn and be followed by maybe weeks of fine sunny weather with no frost at all! That’s a bad kind of climate; I’d like the scientific people to try a hand at the weather!’

It was known that Mr. Dennis had shown his neighbors all through the summer the most beautiful ‘eighty’ of corn, men had ever seen! Then —

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost, —

‘Science will get around to the weather some time’, said McQ, ‘men will sooner match plants to weather, than weather to plants. Nature has been doing that all the time; she has made a pretty good fit you see; but at one end or the other the frost catches almost all plants, either in spring-time bloom or autumn fruit; forest-bloom even sometimes freezes in spring, and gives the native trees a fruitless year! a year of rest!’

XXXIV

THE GOLDEN RULE

NEXT day the farmers were all in the fields, cutting their corn; was not the day fine and the corn could be saved by cutting; so, Saturday though it was, the porch was deserted. But Miss Blew had a visit from her old-time friend.

‘You weren’t out last night, Miss Blew. Well you had ought to have been; we all missed you! But that man McQ — well; he told more about corn-stalks than I ever knew before, or anybody else, I think. Pap says he doesn’t think McQ’s orthodox; but I don’t see as that has anything to do with raising corn, do you Miss Blew? He said that some Scotchmen had been prying around, trying to explain the Bible. Pap says there isn’t anything to explain. Pap said he wished his preacher-brother had have lived to have heard.

‘He talked about the development theory. He said it was in the corn already; he didn’t say anything about monkeys. Pap keeps telling me that if you’re a developer you believe your grandmother was a monkey. It’s only when you don’t know that you believe, isn’t it, Miss Blew? I knew my grandmother, knew her very well; so I don’t have to believe anything about her, not a thing; she was as nice a woman as you ever saw; so I’m no developer myself. Anyhow the Scotch don’t agree with one another; so there’s nothing settled; but McQ seemed very much interested in what he showed us and told us.

‘But we had plenty of poetry, too, Miss Blew. The

new schoolma'am spoke some verses from Whittier, part of a piece, and the children sang; all about corn. She is a very pretty girl, our new teacher, and the poetry was good. I have been hearing it all for a week; but Mrs. Lyon — she spoke! About corn it was, too; but Miss Blew, as sure as I'm sitting here, hers was poetry too! It rhymed anyway'.

Mrs. Ramsgate went on in her half-humorous way to tell what a reception Mrs. Lyon had on her appearance, what applause as she took her seat, and what congratulations followed; but she seemed careful all the time to avoid expression of personal opinion. This was so unusual, so entirely out of character, that Miss Blew finally asked her what she thought of Mrs. Lyon's poetry.

'Oh well; if I was to say I didn't like it, they'd all say "that's because you don't know anything about it"; and if I was to say I liked it better than Whittier's, they'd say, "that is because you don't know anything about either of them": so I reckon I'd best keep still.

'But, Miss Blew, I'll tell you what I will say — that same Mrs. Lyon can make a glass of the nicest wild-plum jell of any woman on this prairie!'

This somewhat startling and ambiguous statement might have seemed to require explanation, had not the speaker herself proceeded immediately to present a concrete illustration.

'You know our William is studying law down at Ann Arbor. He was sick about a week one time this fall, and Mrs. Lyon sent that boy a glass of wild-plum jell! It was so pretty that William just set it on the window by his bed, he said, and looked at it, and saw the light come through. By and by one day he said he thought he'd like to taste it; then we knowed he was getting better!

'Miss Blew, Mrs. Lyon can make the nicest plum-jell I ever saw on this prairie!'

Sunday too was fine, fine! — The corn is drying; it will be the better standing, if the weather last. Monday fine; the farmers toiling in every field. What a pity, that September frost, with all such fine warm days to follow!

Tuesday fine! Indian summer beginning now! Were the kernels only a little hard, how glorious Iowa! how happy we had been!

Wednesday afternoon, still fine. The whitened corn-blades are whispering, singing as always their wonted autumn song; but listen! What! What are these other voices that fill the air, disturbing rumors coming from nowhere, floating as on the wind, from field to field, at length from home to home — what, what are these messages of fear?

What's that, you say? *War!* War in Virginia? A *negro insurrection*? What? Virginia? *United States Army!* — *What?* *John Brown!*

'That's what I hear.'

The men of the prairie were dumb. Excitement filled the very air.

But in the dusk of evening each rode his plow-horse bare-back to the dim-lighted, now neglected store, where by low-flaming, smoky candle the pallid merchant stood. 'John Brown and his men took Harper's Ferry and held it all one day against the United States! He's caught now himself, and lots of his people killed. There's one Iowa boy among them. That's the news; that's what I hear.'

The farmers listened silent. One by one in silence they slipped away into the darkness, as they had come.

It was night; night on all the prairie; night in the hearts of men.

Morning dawned; all nature beautiful; no cloud, no wind. The sun, although on his retreating pathway through the sky, still warmed our fields. The stirring plow still rustled as it passed along, the loaded wagons, creaking, sought the sheds and cribs, while in their homes the busy women plied their arts accustomed. But somehow all was changed. No more remembered development, star, or comet, the very lyceum quite forgot. 'Will not someone tell Father Blew', each man kept thinking. Chance to tell him no one had at first; Father Blew too was busy. At length some one told him. 'Wait a little', was all he said.

During the few days that intervened between the fateful Sunday and the end of the month, our friends of the prairie were quiet. Some of them had seen Brown; some knew him; all knew of the 'underground railway'; but we were surely not a station on that line; although some people believed that a terminus on a branch of it was once not far away when, by his denunciatory eloquence, Henry Clay Dean saved Sue Whitecotton — our only colored woman, free-born — from kidnapping and sale in Missouri by a pair of precious scamps, wolves in borrowed raiment, pretended agents for something published at the New York Bible House, therefore trustworthy. Oh yes, we had heard of Brown.

On the present occasion our men said nothing, but kept scanning the columns of the *Tribune*, instable even then. However, Mr. Dennis fain as he was to put immediate end to slavery, thoroughly disapproved of Brown. His whole performance was absolutely unreasoning. He had heard that as against stupidity, even

the gods are powerless; perhaps Morris had told him that, or was it Landsman. At any rate, he said, 'Brown ought to be hung, and all his fellow-conspirators. Pity that Iowa boy was caught among them, but a rescue-party would be but another act of madness — civil war sure!'

The Squire thought John Brown 'one of the men who fear God, but are afraid of nothing else. He says he has destroyed slavery; maybe he has; but I fear he has wrecked the Union too. We should be able to destroy the rats without sinking the ship and killing all the people on board.'

'It is an accident-case', said the doctor, 'looks very dangerous, but I have known very bad accident-cases to recover, where you can keep the patient quiet, avoid cerebral hemorrhage and pneumo-gastric complications.'

'Things never turns out just as we would like they should, even when we know they ought to. No, no, Miss Blew. Pap says those men was all plumb crazy, every one of them; if he had anything to say about it, he'd send all, all that's left, to the 'sylum to be kept there during good behavior. There's been enough killing, Pap thinks. What do you think about it, Miss Blew?'

'I think it too bad to talk about, at least for now.'

'In 1859 November days were fine', was proverbial later on. With us they were fine, indeed, and very busy. To lighten and gladden the certainly approaching darkness of winter, every preparation now went on. It was well. The times were hard; suffering and hardship threatening almost every home, if not already felt. Copies of newspapers were everywhere in demand, worn out as from hand to hand they passed. In Iowa, at least, most of the excitement died away; our people were

learning; but newspapers still found place for stories of alarm.

For once, even Father Blew seemed in doubt; said little; rejoiced in the fine weather. 'A pleasant November; that's one good thing in the situation anyway. Let us make the most of it; better not talk about other things until we know more.'

But December was a winter-month, began in storm. On the second the snow was blowing. It was cold; people stayed indoors.

Father Blew was late that morning. 'It is long past sun-up; but one would hardly know it, for the snow', said his sister.

The old gentleman had just come in from the chores. Miss Blew, still busy indoors, looked up surprised to see men standing at the door. Muffled and veiled in whirling snow, she scarcely knew them. They did not knock. She opened the door, and bade them enter the kitchen, the only place in the house where that morning there was fire. She called her brother, and when he arrived, quietly wrapped a heavy shawl about her head and fled to her neighbor's, following the trail the men had made.

What those farmers did and what they said that snowy day we may not know; they never told! 'Mostly we listened', said McQ. 'Dennis asked questions. The Squire and the Judge said nothing', reported Mr. Ramsgate. But Father Blew was kind; he guessed their wish and opened to the men his mind.

'Of course, there is nothing for it now', he quietly began, 'the deed is done. The courts have done their appointed work; the issue good or bad is not with us.

'Aside from the present terrible outcome, the whole performance is absurd. But, as now appears, not from

John Brown's point of view. That he should have brought others to his side is indeed a marvel. That men should have given him money for his quixotic schemes is more a wonder, until we reflect that men with money often are willing to give it to others for accomplishment of tasks they refuse to attempt themselves.

'Brown evidently studied the matter long. For him immediate victory or defeat should be alike triumphant — his personal duty done. He brought to the sacrifice not only his misguided followers, but his own sons beloved, and at last himself, with a cool, daring courage, not exceeded in the history of men; and all with such a mind, so clear, so unperturbed as must forever put away all suggestions of mania, or insanity. The man was not insane.

'He sacrificed his own life, the lives of his sons, of all who would join him, to satisfy his conscience that he had done his part in redeeming human beings from bondage unspeakable. That undoubtedly was his idea; but his plan was nevertheless utterly wrong in concept as in execution. He forgot that he was a member of a great community and by his violence he threw in jeopardy not only the very thing he held so fixed in mind, but the very existence of the Republic, too. Ours is a democracy of freemen, no doubt; but its most vital, all important concept is self-restraint. Brown seems never to have thought of that. In judgment he was absolutely wrong. He was criminal.

'Liberty is the daughter of law; Brown's folly may bring civil war. We may have to fight to save the Republic. Such a war, if long continued, will in the end destroy the defeated section and leave the other with losses irretrievable; while the negro, bond or free, will

remain a problem, I fear, for generations and generations yet to come.

‘I have spoken of the clearness of Brown’s mind. I must confess that he has made in his own defense a suggestion that I think novel, remarkable, and of importance quite the highest.

‘I refer now to his speech in court, a speech that will live as a masterpiece of forensic pleading. You have all read it but let me cite just the opening sentences:

‘“This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them. I endeavored to act up to that instruction.”

‘Under the circumstances—the man standing convicted before a hostile court, denying the justice of the verdict—under the circumstances, are not these tremendous words, most aptly quoted, unanswerable from any point of view, convicting at once, in so far, the court and the nation, an appeal direct to the court of Heaven. That golden rule which, as a courtesy, we have all so much admired, and used so pleasantly in ordinary familiar intercourse among our friends, that golden rule is law, law promulgated by the Son of God, the King of Heaven, to be obeyed, enforced, everywhere among the sons of men. Let the Christian world take note. “I stand here”, Brown seems to say, “in the face of death and plead. Slavery is not only a disgusting thing, a dire and dreadful thing, an unholy, in every way unspeakable thing, but it is a direct violation of the sim-

plest law of God. I stand here before this court and by your own consent hold up the flashing of God's Golden Rule. Ignore it if you dare!"

'In fact, my friends, while I look upon the probable result of the Harper's Ferry raid with greatest fear, and filled with sorrow at what has but just occurred, yet I confess that the whole history of Brown since the verdict has given me an entirely new conception of that strange erratic character who still, for Christian men at least, has brought to view the essential wickedness of human slavery in a single line.'

As Father Blew went on to say such things, he was continually interrupted, almost from sentence to sentence called upon to answer questions; so that instead of the simple summary here set down, the reader who remembers each man's temperament and character, must imagine a lively conference, entirely free, where two whole hours went by unnoted. The opposition, of course, was led by Mr. Dennis.

The whole story of the foray passed in review that day, no known detail omitted; no conclusion reached, save that the case was bad. At last the company rose and separated just as Squire Marks was exclaiming: 'Winter will cool the temper of the North; but since Harper's Ferry, the whole South seems to feel resentment only, increasing indignation, and I don't wonder.'

Outside the door each man inclined to take his several way; but Mr. Lyon called: 'The fifties have been bad; they mostly have; but I'm for something new. Come on everybody, and see my plans!'

Mr. Ramsgate reported that only Father Blew could take the time. The old man sprang to the cutter with Lyon and McQ and disappeared in the whirling snow.

Toward mid-day when Miss Blew returned, she found her house deserted, empty and silent. The kitchen fire still softly burned; in the kettle, scarce audible, the water simmered; Tabby upon the spotless floor lay fast asleep. A few wooden chairs stood stiffly by the walls; but on the walnut table, sight unwonted, an old, brown, leather-covered volume rested, closed; and on its time-stained cover worn and shining, a pair of gold-rimmed glasses folded lay.

December, eighteen hundred and fifty-nine; Oh Clio, rest not now. Take to thee tablets new and wide. No new decade; lo, a new era is at hand!

No more attend the simple annals of the furrowed field, where farmer folk obscure may strive to see, to do, the right. Vast tragedy looms now, wide-roaring as if to overwhelm the world. North and South, all highest hopes, the very faith of men to one disaster doomed. Oh Clio take thee tablets new, new and wide — brazen tablets — and write with pen of iron!

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